BETTY
A SCHOOLGIRL

MRS L. T. MEADE

Rhoda Tuttle

"YOU HAVE DONE THIS, AND YOU EXPECT ME TO SUBMIT?"

Betty: a Schoolgirl.

BETTY
A SCHOOLGIRL

By

MRS. L. T. MEADE

AUTHOR OF
BETTY OF THE RECTORY, A SWEET GIRL
GRADUATE, GIRLS NEW AND OLD, ETC.

New York

THE PLATT & PECK CO.

COPYRIGHT, 189[illegible] BY
CASSELL PUBLISHING COMPANY

All rights reserved.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Go or Stay,	1
II.	A Five-Pound Note,	6
III.	Red and White,	16
IV.	A Strange Evening,	29
V.	Betty's Black Dress,	39
VI.	Promises Shouldn't be Broken,	49
VII.	Jasper,	59
VIII.	Seven Maids,	70
IX.	The Letter,	84
X.	Mademoiselle's Rule,	97
XI.	After the Fun was Over,	108
XII.	By the Crossroads,	119
XIII.	Fifteen Guineas,	128
XIV.	The Money in the Sealskin Purse,	140
XV.	The Threefold Competition,	152
XVI.	A Tonic,	168
XVII.	Pay Day and a Competition,	179
XVIII.	Starved,	190
XIX.	Lotty's Help,	200
XX.	Conspirators,	209
XXI.	Lotty's Lost Key,	219
XXII.	White or Green Sashes,	229
XXIII.	In the Chaste Moonlight,	244
XXIV.	Keep Silence,	253
XXV.	Caught in a Trap,	264
XXVI.	Who was the Writer?	275
XXVII.	Betty to the Rescue,	288

BETTY: A SCHOOLGIRL.

CHAPTER I.

GO OR STAY.

THE parlor was not an interesting room. It was as dingy and dull as a London parlor which has been exposed to fogs and all the dirt which accompanies London winters, usually is. There had been no fresh paper put on the walls for years, and the paint on the woodwork was blistered and cracked, and the old leather-covered furniture was decidedly the worse for wear. There were two high windows which looked into a dismal square. The upper part of the windows had Venetian blinds painted green, and the lower part, wire blinds, which kept passers-by from looking in, and kept the people who were within from seeing out very distinctly. Standing by one of the wire blinds now was a tall girl of between eleven and twelve years of age. She was dressed in deep black made in a very ugly and ungainly fashion. Her hair, which was straight and thick, hung down her

back; she had large gray eyes, and a thin, somewhat sallow face. As she looked through the window, her little mouth quivered with emotion.

"There's your supper, Miss Betty," said a servant who entered the room. "Sit down and eat it, and then go to bed. Here, stand out of my way; do, child, and let me pull down the blinds."

"Not this blind," said Betty, making a sudden spring forward. "The lamplighter is just going by, and it will be interesting out in the street in a moment. You are not to pull down this blind, Hester; I won't have it. Don't you know that I must have something to look at, and something to do, besides just to listen, listen, listen?"

"Folly, Miss Betty!" said the woman. "You always were the most willful, contrairy child. What will your father say when he comes in presently and finds the blinds up and the curtains not drawn?"

"I'll tell him," said Betty; "I'll explain it to him. You need not be afraid of getting into trouble, Hester. O Hester, do you think he'll soon come out? Do you think it will soon be over?"

"Yes, my love. Why, I declare the child is quite trembling! Anyone would think that you had the very gayest bit of life in the world here, to see the way you cling to it. Why, Miss Betty, it will be the best thing in the world for you if

it's 'Go,' and the worst thing if it's 'Stay.' There, oh, mercy's sake! don't strangle me! What are you rushing at me like that for?"

"I always hate you when you talk to me in that fashion," said Betty, whose little face had suddenly turned crimson. "There! I don't want the supper—you needn't leave it. I wouldn't touch it, if it were fifty times as nice and I were fifty times as hungry."

"And you know you're as hungry——" began Hester.

"Take it away; go, go this minute!"

"All right," said Hester. "I'll obey you, Miss Betty, and then you'll see how you'll feel."

She took up the tray, which contained a delicious basin of smoking hot bread and milk, and went out of the room. Betty stood quite still until the door had closed behind her; then she went back to the window, and resumed her occupation of looking out. She was trembling all over now, and anyone who watched her could have seen that she was making a valiant effort to keep back her tears. She was cold, and, still more, she was quite achingly hungry. Her dinner had been a scanty one, and it was hours since it was finished, and that supper looked delicious; still she would not touch it—she would rather starve out and out than touch what cruel Hester had made. How dared Hester say

it would be best for her to go, and worst for her to stay? Worst to stay indeed, in the house where mother had lived and died—in the house where she had been born, and which, dull as it was, was the only home she had ever known Best for her to leave her father? Best? Betty clenched her teeth, and the color rushed up to her face in angry waves. Oh, dear! she felt quite sick of everything—she was so hungry, and life was so dull, and the aching longing to see mother once again almost maddened her at times. And why did father keep on talking, talking in the next room, and when would she know? It was so dreadful to be in suspense like this, and perhaps in the end the worse would come, and horrid, horrid Hester would say it was for the best.

The lamplit streets were not interesting after all, and Betty turned away from the window. The fire was almost out in the grate, and the gas was turned down low. Betty shivered, and then a great wave of sorrow coming over her, she flung herself full length on the hearthrug, and burst into tears. She was not a child who cried long, and she soon wiped them away. Footsteps were heard at last in the other room—unmistakable footsteps at last. They came toward the door—they entered the narrow hall outside. Betty sat upright. "At last," she said to herself—"at long,

weary last. Now, which is it? Is it go, and be wretched? Or is it stay, and be at least peaceful? Oh, how starvingly hungry I am, and how cold! And I'm almost sick with longing. Which is it—go or stay? Why won't father bid him good-by? Oh, if they only knew what I'm suffering! I can't stand this suspense any longer. Ah, at last!"

The hall door was shut with a bang, and Mr. Falkoner, Betty's father, approached the door of the parlor.

Betty rushed to it herself, and flung it open.

"Well," she said—"well, which is it? Oh, what an age you have been! And I'm so sick with longing and—and suspense. Which is it, father? Is it go or stay?"

CHAPTER II.

A FIVE-POUND NOTE.

MR. FALKONER came into the room and shut the door behind him. He was a tall, thin man, with a great look of Betty about his eyes and in the way his hair grew on his forehead. He had hectic spots on his cheeks, which were painfully hollow; there were dark shadows under his eyes. His mouth, which was hidden by a long mustache, was very sad in its expression. He wore a threadbare and shining frock coat, and had slippers, which Betty's mother had worked for him, on his feet. Altogether he was a dreary-looking man, quite in keeping with the parlor. It was not in Mr. Falkoner's nature to be in a hurry about anything, and he did not hasten to reply to Betty's question. He went up and stood close to the fire.

"It's a bitter night," he said; "there's a fog coming up from the city, and it's freezing hard. Why has not Hester built up the fire and drawn the curtains?"

"I would not let her," said Betty.

"You would not let her! Really, Betty, love, you have very small consideration for my comfort."

"Oh," said Betty, stamping her foot, and a great deal of color coming into her pale little face, "it shall all be done in a moment—the curtains shall be drawn, and the fire built up, and the supper brought in, in a moment—when I know, father, when I know!"

"What an impatient little monkey it is!" said Mr. Falkoner, smiling now at the tall, overgrown child. "It's good news, Betty, my dear. Sunny skies for me, and no more fogs; and for you——"

"You needn't go on, father. I'll be back in a minute; I—I'm just going to speak to Hester."

Betty dashed out of the room, slamming the parlor door behind her. She went down a narrow passage, and opening the kitchen door, poked her head in.

"Hester," she said, "father is in the parlor; he wants his supper, the curtains drawn, and the fire built up. See to it, please." She banged the kitchen door as she had banged the parlor one, and ran upstairs. On the first landing she turned, and going into her own little bedroom, went over to the window and looked out. The same view that she had gazed at so long in the parlor met her eyes: the people hurrying backward and forward—the blinds all down in the

opposite houses—the fanlights bright with gas light streaming through—now and then a shadow on the blind of a window more brightly lighted than its neighbors. In the distance Betty could see the confectioner's where she had so often gone to buy cakes and scones for her mother when she was ill. Betty was given threepence a week pocket money, and during mother's illness that threepence was eked out with care. The whole of this large sum was spent week by week during that long weary time in dainties for mother's afternoon tea. Sometimes it was a new-laid egg, which the confectioner's wife gave to Betty for a penny; sometimes a tea cake; sometimes a scone. How carefully the treasured dainty was carried home, how perfectly the scone was toasted, and how watchfully Betty measured the exact moment which the egg would take in coming to that state of perfection which mother liked! Well, it was all over now—mother did not need these dainties, and Betty herself had not been near the confectioner's for months. She did not think horses could drag her into that shop. When she went out, she always turned in another direction to avoid passing it, but to-night, for the first time, she looked at it with a sort of regretful longing. She was going away from the uninteresting street and from the neighborhood of the shop with its memories;

she was going away from all she most loved; and no one cared—that was the worst part; everyone seemed glad; everyone seemed to think it was a good thing.

"Miss Betty, supper is ready. I have warmed up your bread and milk and brought it in a second time, and the master says to go down at once," called Hester's voice at the door.

"All right," replied Betty. She did not wipe any tears from her eyes—she was quite past the weeping stage; she turned and went out of the room, passing Hester on the stairs, and re-entered the parlor in a dignified fashion. The parlor had been made almost cheerful in her absence. The dark red moreen curtains had been drawn across the ugly windows, the fire blazed high in the grate, the gas was turned full on, and the center-table had a white cloth on it. Betty's bread and milk waited for her at one end; at the other were two covered dishes, a hot plate, a couple of knives and forks, a wine-glass, and a small bottle of burgundy. Mr. Falkoner was standing by the fire. He looked up impatiently when Betty entered.

"Come," he said, "supper is ready. If you are not hungry, I am. Come along, and let us make a good meal; afterward we'll have a nice long talk."

As Mr. Falkoner spoke, he drew up his chair to the table, and removed the cover from an

appetizing mutton chop and a little dish of hot mashed potatoes. He helped himself immediately, and began to eat. Betty sat down to her bread and milk without a word. She ate up every scrap before she even looked at her father.

"Now I am better," he said, smiling at her, "and I have not the least doubt you are the same."

"I'm less hungry," said Betty.

"We'll get Hester to remove the things," said Mr. Falkoner, "and then we'll have our talk. I've a good deal to tell you and to talk over. You'll have to be a very busy, useful little woman for the next few days."

Betty opened her lips as if to speak, but no words came. Hester entered and removed the the supper things. She gave a keen glance at father and daughter, and nodded her head emphatically. When she left the room, Betty went and stood on the hearthrug opposite to her father.

"Now I'm ready," she said.

"What a tragic voice!" said Mr. Falkoner. "Really, my child, you ought to be pleased, and you will be pleased by and by."

"*Don't*, father, don't!"

"Well, well, I won't say any more, if it hurts your feelings so dreadfully. I'll just state what has happened in the briefest words possible. Are you prepared to listen?"

"Of course I am, father."

"Well, here's the story: You know I have been in delicate health for a long time, and my lungs are not quite sound. Dr. Baird always said that the best chance for me was to leave England for a time. I could not go during your mother's life, but afterward I thought of it, and wondered if it could be managed. We had a thick fog yesterday, and I was obliged to be out in it. In the evening I came home feeling very much worse; I spent the night coughing."

"I heard you," said Betty. "I could not sleep either, because I listened so hard."

"Well, now then," said Mr. Falkoner, "ought you not to be glad for my sake?"

"Oh, I'm so horribly selfish!" said Betty; "but please don't mind me—go on with the story."

"I felt so ill this morning that I went to see Baird, and Baird took me to a great doctor, Sir Thomas Chance, and Chance said that I must not risk wintering here. Then I wired to my friend Lawson, who had offered to take me with him to Florida some months ago. Lawson was still in England."

"You told me all that part at dinner," interrupted Betty. "I knew Mr. Lawson was coming, and that you were going to talk over things, and I knew it was necessary for you to go; but what have you settled—what's really going to happen?"

"Splendid news, Betty, child! Lawson has really risen to the occasion like a brick. He cannot leave England just yet, but I am to go out to his partner in a fortnight, and as I know foreign languages well, and can help him in several matters, he starts me at once with a good salary. I'll be able to pay for your schooling while I'm away, and if the place agrees with me, I'll make a home there and send for you presently."

"Presently!" said Betty. "Oh, father! Oh, father!"

"What's the matter, my little girl?"

Betty suddenly rushed to Mr. Falkoner's side, flung her arms round his neck, and pressed her cheek to his.

"I don't love you as I loved mother," she said with a sort of gasp and pant in her voice, "but I love you next best. How am I to live without you, and without mother's grave? When Hester is kind, she takes me to Brompton Cemetery, and I put flowers on mother's grave; but now there'll be no pleasure left for me in life. Oh, father, if you must go away, take lodgings for Hester and me at Brompton; do, father—please, father, do."

"Now listen to me, Betty," said Mr. Falkoner. "All this kind of thing is extremely bad for you, and not at all what your mother would wish. Do you think, Betty, that she really wants you to go and cry over her grave? She was never selfish

in this life, and I'm sure she's not selfish in the better life she has now entered upon. What she'd like you to do would be to learn bravery and to become strong and wise, and then you'll be a fine woman by and by, and you will be able to do good in the world; and if you love me next best to mother, I hope you'll try for these things during my absence. I have neglected you a good deal in the past, child, but I feel very much for you now."

"Do you really—really, father?" Betty could scarcely speak, she felt so astonished.

"Yes, I do, very much. I mean to make a home for you, and you shall come to me when you're old enough. Now, shall I tell you what I think of doing with you while I'm away?"

"I suppose I'll have to go to some horrid school!"

"Not exactly a school: but do you remember your mother's friend, Miss St. Leger?"

"Mother used to call her Agatha," exclaimed Betty. "She came to see her once, and mother was pleased with her, but I did not care for her."

"Why not?"

"She was very prim and starched up—poked up, I should say. I hate starched people!"

"Betty, Betty, you must curb those loves and hatreds of yours. You are altogether too fierce for a modern young lady."

"I don't care a fig for being a modern young lady. I'm just Betty Falkoner—me, myself. I don't want to follow anybody, or to be the least scrap in the fashion."

"There, there!" said Mr. Falkoner, patting Betty's wiry little hand with his thin fingers; "time and life will curb all these crude remarks. You'll be cut in the usual fashion presently, Betty, and I dare say you'll suit the style of the day as well as any other girl. Now I have heard a great deal in favor of Miss St. Leger, and I am sure your mother would like you to go to her. She lives in the country in Dorsetshire, and has three nieces whom she is educating, and three other girls whom she is looking after for their parents; and if she consents to take you, that will make seven; so you see you won't be at all lonely, and will have plenty of opportunities of getting on with your studies. Miss St. Leger's house is, I believe, large and rambling, and as it is in the very heart of the country, it is sure to be very healthy; and when the summer comes, you will enjoy yourself there immensely. This will be much better for you than going to a regular school; besides, I should not care to send you to anyone whom I knew nothing about. There is no time to be lost, as I must be off in a fortnight, and want to see you settled first; so I will write to Miss St. Leger to-night. And now, look here;

you will want to buy yourself some clothes. What do you say to this?"

Mr. Falconer fumbled in his pocket and presently pulled out a five-pound note.

"You are a careful child," he said, "and will, I am sure, make this money go as far as you can. Take Hester with you to-morrow and begin to make your purchases. Miss St. Leger will clothe you in the future; but you may buy what you fancy with this."

"Anything that I fancy, father? Anything?"

"Yes, yes; I know you won't waste it. And now go to bed, my love."

CHAPTER III.

RED AND WHITE.

BUSY days always pass rapidly, and no days pass so rapidly as those we want to keep. All Betty's future seemed to her to have been arranged in a flash. She had lived ever since she could remember in the poky little house in the small street in Bloomsbury. She had been tired enough of the parlor, with its dingy paper and worn paint. She had been sick of father's uninteresting study, and of her own poorly furnished bedroom; she had sighed for a nice, pretty drawing room, and for the tempting things which other girls had. She never expected any of these things to come to her, however; she was rooted to that parlor, and that house, and that narrow life. Then suddenly the shadow of a fearful trouble came to her. Her mother, whom she loved so passionately, died after a lingering illness, and when Betty had recovered from the sort of stupor into which this great grief had thrown her, she found that her father was ill, and that there was a talk of a complete change. The talk was quickly followed by a certainty.

Father was going to Florida, Hester was going home to her own people, the house was to be given up, the furniture sold, and Betty was to go away to the country to a lady whom her mother had always spoken of as Agatha St. Leger. Whenever Mrs. Falkoner wanted to impress Betty—whenever she wanted to show her what a woman could really become—she spoke of her friend Agatha, who had come into the world—as Betty knew well, for she had heard the story so often—with every disadvantage which could cling to a woman; for Agatha had wretched health and great poverty, and at an early age she became an orphan, and was badly treated by her friends. But Agatha had character which rose above all circumstances, she had strength about her which inspired respect, she had a firmness which forced people to obey her, she had a wisdom which is given to few; so all who knew her thought highly of her, and many mothers besides Mrs. Falkoner thought themselves lucky if they could place their daughters under her care. Betty listened to all these descriptions, and willful, contrary little maid that she was, liked none of them. She wanted beautiful, fascinating women; she did not care a bit for wisdom and common sense. She sincerely hoped that it would never be her lot to go to Agatha.

"Oh, you will never be lucky enough!" her

mother answered with a smile. Well, now she was going; it was all arranged. This was Wednesday, and she was going to-morrow. One of her mother's old trunks had been repaired, and a new lock put on it, and Betty's clothes were packed, and she was going away. She would have only one more night in the old house—only one more chance, just before she went to bed, of slipping into the room where mother had died, and kissing the pillow where the beloved head no longer lay. This was the very last evening in which she might look at the confectioner's shop. Mr. Falconer was going himself to take Betty down to Melville Hall, the name of Miss St. Leger's place. He would just take her there and spend one night, and come back the next morning, for there was a great deal to be done before the day when he himself sailed. There was to be an auction at Betty's home; the ugly curtains, and the ugly furniture, and the uninteresting pictures would all be scattered. Betty quite saw the reason why she must be sent out of the way.

She had spent some of her five pounds, but not all. Hester, who had gone out with her to shop, had insisted on certain purchases—not hats, nor ribbons, nor any pretty things of that sort, but new boots, and new shoes, and some extra stockings, and a new brush and comb, and other things of the deadly uninteresting sort. And then Betty

had insisted on buying a present for Hester and a present for her father. She was not at all puzzled about Hester's present, which consisted of an elaborately fitted-up workbox, but she spent a good deal of time and thought over Mr. Falkoner's. He was going away, and he was not well. He was always a man who required a great deal of care. During mother's lifetime he had got it; he was always placed first. The nicest food was for him, the best wine, the most comfortable chairs; and when mother got ill and disturbed him at night, he still kept the most comfortable bedroom.

While mother lived, Betty had been angry about these comforts, but now she thought how terribly he would miss them. Her present for him therefore, after a whole night spent wide awake thinking about it, was a little traveling Etna—one of the newest and most complete little Etnas that could possibly be found. Betty felt almost joyful when she gave it to her father and explained exactly how he was to use it, and Hester promised to pack it for Mr. Falkoner in a basket which Betty also bought for the purpose; and the basket was to hold half a pound of fragrant tea and a tin of Swiss milk, and some sugar, and a cup and saucer, and a little tea infuser. And Betty smiled again as she thought of her father making tea for himself on board the *Juno*,

and she wondered if he would think of her while he drank it. Someone had once told Betty of the shocking tea most people had on board ship. The thought of that tea, and then of this which her father would really enjoy, comforted her immensely.

Hester felt very angry with Betty for saving at least two pounds out of the three, but on this point Betty was quite firm.

"I'm not going to save all of it," she said. "I want some of it for a very, very special purpose —that you'll know perhaps before I go away," answered the little girl. Now, it was the last day, and the hour for Betty's special purpose had come. The early dinner was over, and she ran into the kitchen, to find Betty "up to her eyes," as she expressed it.

"Well now, Miss Betty, what do you want?" said the servant. "I can't be bothered with children about on a busy day like this. Why, there's the clerk from the auctioneer's office coming round to label all the things early to-morrow morning, and how I'm to be ready for him is more than I can say. You run away, Miss Betty; your things are packed, my dear, all except your linen, which is airing by the fire. There, my love, you can't help me, and it does bother me so to see you standing about."

"I thought," said Betty, in a very wistful

voice, "that as it was the last day, you'd come out with me for a bit."

Hester threw up her hands.

"Well, the unreasonableness of some folks!" she exclaimed. "No, no, Miss Betty, there's no going out for me to-day; not the ghost of a chance of such a thing. You put that out of your head, my dear."

"Then I suppose I may go by myself?" said Betty.

"I suppose so; you have been often enough by yourself. Don't get into mischief, and don't be long away."

"Good-by, Hester," said Betty softly. She closed the kitchen door, and ran up to her own bedroom. Nothing could please her better; she would much rather go out without Hester, although she had thought it right to ask her to come with her. Fortunately Hester had said nothing about Betty keeping within the neighborhood; she had only made the remark she always did make: "Don't get into mischief, and don't be long away."

"I feel like a woman," thought Betty to herself. "I'm not likely to get into mischief, and as to being long away, I'll be back as soon as ever I can." She dressed herself in feverish haste, buttoning on her thick pilot-cloth jacket, and slipping her hat with its heavy crape trimmings on

her head. Then going to one of her drawers, she took out her purse with her precious two sovereigns, and going solemnly downstairs, opened the hall door and went out. There was no indecision on Betty's face; she knew exactly what she was going to do, and how she was going to do it. She first of all stopped at a florist's shop, and then, after taking a long look at the treasures displayed in the windows, went in.

"I want some flowers, please," said Betty, going up to the counter.

The woman who was serving gave her a somewhat contemptuous glance. Little girls of Betty's appearance sometimes spent a penny or twopence on flowers; they were hardly worth attending to at a time of year when flowers were so scarce.

"Flowers are very expensive to-day," said the woman, in a pert voice, "and we don't make penny and twopenny bunches."

"But I don't want a penny or twopenny bunch," said Betty, in some indignation. "I want a great many more flowers than that. Do you see this basket? Will you fill it, please?"

"Fill that basket!" said the woman in astonishment; "do you know what it will cost, miss?" Her tone had become insensibly much more respectful.

"It does not matter at all what it costs," said

Betty, with gentle dignity. "I want this basket filled with flowers, and the most beautiful ones you have—white ones, if possible, and red flowers."

"Camellias are what we have mostly now," said the woman; "they're twopence each, and cheap for that."

Betty make a hasty calculation.

"I'll have a dozen camellias—six red and six white. Be sure you let me have very perfect ones, for *she'd* know; she's very particular."

The woman did not ask who *she* was, nor would Betty have told her. The camellias were placed in the bottom of the basket with extreme care, Betty herself making a most fastidious selection. Then some maiden-hair ferns were spread over them, and then some large white chrysanthemums filled the remaining space.

"I have white and blue violets here," said the woman, bringing a great bowl suddenly into view. Betty gave a gasp at the sight, and a flood of color rushed over her face.

"Do they smell?" she asked.

"You put your nose to them, miss; they came over from Nice this morning."

Betty buried her pale little face among the violets.

"Oh, thank you so much!" she said; "thank you for showing them to me. She loves violets beyond anything."

"Perhaps it's an invalid lady?" said the woman; "violets are wonderfully comforting to invalids."

"Oh, no! she's not an invalid at all," said Betty; "but I'll take a shilling's worth of violets, please—half white and half blue."

There was something in Betty's tone which made the woman, almost against her will, generous. She gave a very large bunch of violets for that shilling, and could not imagine why she felt so cheerful and good-tempered after doing so.

"Thank you so much!" said Betty, in a tone of rapture; "they're most lovely. I'm awfully obliged. How much do all the flowers come to, please?"

"Five shillings, miss."

Betty took out one of her sovereigns, received fifteen shillings in change, and then with her sweet-scented basket on her arm, went out of the shop.

"I wonder what kind of lady those flowers are for?" thought the woman. "She's mighty particular, whoever she is. That's a queer sort of child, too; but there's a look about her eyes which somehow haunts a body. I expect she has seen a good bit of trouble in her day, poor little mite."

Betty meanwhile was walking quickly down one of the many streets which lead from Blooms-

bury to New Oxford Street. Here she had an earnest consultation with a friendly policeman, and presently found herself in an omnibus which was to land her by and by at the gates of the Brompton Cemetery. She had often been to the cemetery, but never alone before; she was very glad indeed that she was able to go alone to-day. A good many people stared at the little girl in deep black, with her beautiful and sweet-smelling flowers, but no one made any remark about her, and presently Betty got down at her destination and went into the cemetery. The day happened to be a specially fine one, but it was now nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, and Betty felt sure that unless she was very quick indeed, she would not be home before dark. The sun was shining in long slanting rays across the graves, as Betty went and stood by one. No tombstone had yet been erected here. "It was too soon," Betty's father had said, but he faithfully promised that one should be put up presently. Betty sat down by the little mound of earth, and taking the flowers out of her basket, began to arrange them. Her face was very pale, but she did not dream of crying; she was a great deal too busy. The camellias, in their waxen whiteness and crimson blaze of color, were the first to be attended to. Betty filled a little circular tin can, which stood on the head of the grave, with water; she then placed

the flowers in. "White flowers for the angels," muttered Betty, "and deep red flowers for my love." She put the little wreath on the head of the grave; the white chrysanthemums were scattered here and there, and the violets lay in a tumbled mass at the foot.

"Mother will like them like that," murmured Betty, standing up and contemplating her work with anxiety; "she was always very particular, and she could not bear prim flowers. It's all right—the white flowers and the red, and the sweet-smelling violets; nothing could be more lovely. Good-by, mother, darling! I'm going away, but you know my heart is always with you. Now I must see the gardener, for you can't possibly do without your flowers."

Betty walked down through the narrow paths between the graves, and at last, to her relief, saw a man digging and gardening at a little distance. She ran quickly up to him.

"Are you the man who looks after the graves?" she asked, in an eager voice.

"Yes, miss; can I do anything for you?"

"You can, please; will you come with me here?"

Betty walked quickly back to her mother's grave; the man followed her.

"Do you see this grave?" she said; "it belongs to me. I am going away; I—I can't come to

take care of it, as I would have done; it's a great trouble to me."

"Yes, miss," said the man, who was too much accustomed to grief to be much moved by it; "I have the care of a many graves round here, and parties like yourself, miss, that are away, are mighty pleased. There's Lord Edgecome now—my Lady Edgecome lies in that vault over there with that garden round it—I does the gardening, miss, and his ludship is very pleased."

"Yes, yes," said Betty. "I want mother's grave to have flowers—all the flowers you can cram together; and I want the place to be neat; and if I send you a box of flowers by post, I want you to put them on the grave. What will you do it for?"

"I'd keep this grave quite elegant," said the man; "a blaze of flowers in the summer, and some 'ardy plants in the winter, and always as neat as a new pin, for ten shillings a year."

Betty made a rapid calculation.

"You shall have the money," she said eagerly. "I can manage it somehow. Shall I pay you in advance?"

"You might give me the half in advance, miss, if you'd be so good; I'd see about making the place tidy at once, if I was paid in advance."

Betty took out her purse.

"Here are five shillings," she said, "and please

tell me your name, so that I may write to you. I'll send you another five shillings in six months' time, and you may always count on the money; you'll do your very best, please! She'll know it if you don't, and she's so particular."

"A queer child!" said the old sexton to himself as Betty walked away; but there was something in the forlorn look of the little black-robed figure which brought unwonted tears to his eyes.

"That grave shall look fine," he muttered.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE EVENING.

IT was late on the following evening when Mr. Falkoner and Betty arrived at the flourishing town of Dorchester. Melville Hall was seven miles away, right in the heart of a wild moorland country, but as Betty and her father drove out to it in a somewhat shaky old fly, they could not see any of that glorious view which was to delight Betty's sensitive little nature presently. Mr. Falkoner had been very kind to his little girl during the journey down. He had dreaded that journey more than he could say. Knowing Betty's character, as he thought he did, he had expected bursts of violent grief, and between the bursts long sulky silences; but Betty gave way to no grief, nor was she the least bit sulky. Whenever she passed an interesting place on the journey she asked intelligent questions about it, and she cut the different newspapers and pamphlets which her father had purchased to read on the way, and gave them to him opened just at the right places. And when he was silent, she became silent; and when he

wished to talk, she spoke with composure, and a sort of new dignified gentleness which rather puzzled him, but which he greatly admired. Other people were in the crowded third-class carriage, and they noticed the delicate-looking man and the sweet-faced, thoughtful child. Mr. Falkoner saw that people looked at Betty, and he began to regard her with some interest himself.

"She's not pretty now," he murmured, "but I should not be the least surprised if she made a pretty woman by and by—at least, I am sure she will make a striking one. She has got her mother's mouth and eyes. Her mother was always remarkable for her eyes, and Betty has got them."

When they got into the fly, Mr. Falkoner took his little girl's hand, and held it in a warm pressure.

"I may not see much of you by yourself, after this drive is over, Betty," he said, "so I wish to say now that I am greatly pleased with you. You have behaved extremely well about this business, and you have been a good girl all day; you have a look of your mother, and I see you mean to resemble her in more ways than one."

Betty made no reply, but she clasped her father's hand very tightly.

"If I work hard," she said, with sudden eagerness, "how soon may I come out to you to Florida?"

"Oh, my dear little girl, not until you are grown up, of course."

"When do you count grown up, father?"

"Let me see—how old are you now?"

"This is February," said Betty; "I'll be twelve in April."

"Well," said Mr. Falkoner, "you may perhaps think of joining me in six years—when you're eighteen. I'll have made a very comfortable home for you then, and you shall come out and take care of me; you must work hard for that. I expect you'll be a great comfort to me when you come."

"I *can't* wait for six years," said Betty, in a passionate sort of voice; "it can't be done! I must come to you sooner."

"Well, well," said Mr. Falkoner in a soothing tone, for he suddenly began to fear a scene, just when he thought he had escaped one, "we'll see about that. I may get quite well and come back to you long before the six years are out. Anyhow, what you have now got to do is to work hard—learn all you can, and become strong and brave in every sense of the word."

Betty leaned back in the cab, and closed her eyes. She did not make any further comment until they got into the long winding avenue which led up to the Hall.

"What hour are you going in the morning, father?"

"Oh, very early, my love—before you are up."

"Please father, let me get up, however early you go! Please promise!"

"Here we are," said Mr. Falkoner, opening the cab door and jumping out. "Very well, Betty, I will speak to Miss St. Leger."

"Remember, father!"

"Yes, yes; jump out, can't you, my dear? Phew! how bitter the air feels in this country place—much colder than London. I wonder where in the world they've placed the bell. Can you find it, cabby? Give a strong pull, like a good fellow; we'll be frozen to death in this wind."

But at this moment the oak doors were thrown back, and a stream of light from a cheerful hall rushed out in a flood, to welcome the travelers. Two nicely dressed maid-servants came down the steps to help the cabman to bring in Betty's trunk, and Miss St. Leger stood in the inner hall to welcome them.

"How do you do?" she said, shaking hands with Mr. Falkoner. "But surely your train is late; I have been waiting supper this half hour."

"No, I assure you, it was a little before time if anything," replied Mr. Falkoner. "This is Betty, Miss St. Leger; I think you have seen her before."

"How do you do, my dear?" said Miss St.

Leger, taking one of Betty's hands, and giving her a sharp kind of little peck on her cheek by way of an embrace.

"If the train was not late," she continued, looking at Mr. Falkoner, "you must have got about the worst cab in Dorchester; but, anyhow, here you are, good people, and that's the main thing. Supper will be on the table in a few minutes, and you must not blame me if it is spoiled."

With these words Miss St. Leger turned sharply round, and began to trot rapidly down a long stone corridor. At the end of the corridor she flung open a door, which revealed a cheerful sort of nondescript room, partly study, partly drawing room, partly dining room. There was a blazing fire at one end, and in front of the fire stood a pretty round table, with places laid for three. A great bunch of holly stood in a high stone vase in the center, and Betty, glancing round the room, saw that there were ferns and primulas and cyclamens, and one or two splendid palm trees scattered here and there. The room was decidedly picturesque, and Betty, as she glanced from it to Miss St. Leger, rather wondered at it.

Miss St. Leger was a small, very thin woman. She was dressed with extreme neatness and extreme severity. There was not an attempt at fashion in her attire. Her thin fair hair was plastered down in old-fashioned braids at each side

of her face, and screwed up in a tiny knot at the back; every hair was in its place, and the whole shone like satin. Her eyes were large and blue; her whole face deeply wrinkled and careworn, and her mouth very firm. She had a very sharp and decided manner; but with all this, and with a bluntness which sometimes almost amounted to rudeness, no truer eyes than hers ever looked straight at anyone.

Betty, however, who could not see the goodness in the eyes then, nor for many a long day after, felt chilled through and through at Miss St. Leger's manner.

"Come, my dear," said that good lady, "what are you staring at me for? You and your good father are late, and now it is your duty to hurry up as much as possible. I can tell you, my good cook Hannah never likes anyone not to be in time for her suppers. I'll thank you, Mr. Falkoner, to ring the bell. Ah, is that you, Alice? Tell Hannah to serve up supper immediately. Mr. Falkoner, you'd like to wash your hands; come this way. Betty, follow me. There's a lavatory on this landing, where you can wash your hands, Betty; I need not trouble to take you to your bedroom just yet. Ah, that will do! never mind your hair, my dear child; it's fairly tidy. Here, come along; I hear the clatter of the dishes. I'm certain poor Hannah's cutlets

are spoiled. It is really too bad about those Dorchester cabs; I must make a fuss, I really must."

Betty hated going into supper in her traveling boots, and with her unbrushed hair, but there was no help for it. Miss St. Leger made her sit with her back to the fire too, which was another thing she detested, but that good lady did not seem disposed to care in the very least whether Betty liked things or not.

The little girl felt too choked with emotion and soreness of heart to touch the good food which was placed before her. Miss St. Leger, who attended to everyone herself, and never ceased a flow of light, rippling conversation, made no remark when Betty's almost untasted cutlet was removed; but when the pudding and a dish of stewed apricots were placed on the table, she turned sharply round.

"Do you want pudding?" she said, addressing Betty in so sharp a voice that the little girl quite jumped.

"Yes, please," she answered timidly.

"You're welcome to it," continued Miss St. Leger, "if you mean to eat it, but I don't allow waste. I observed that you left your cutlet. Alice, have the goodness to keep that cutlet for the cat. Now, do you wish for pudding, or do you not?"

"No," said Betty, looking down to hide her tears.

Miss St. Leger helped herself and Mr. Falkoner. Betty sat and choked.

At last the dreadful meal had come to an end, and Miss St. Leger sprang up.

"I dare say you're tired, good people," she said, "and would like to go to bed?"

"I am anxious to have a little talk with you," said Mr. Falkoner. "I must leave here at an early hour in the morning."

"At what hour?"

"I desired the cabman to be here at seven."

"Alice," said Miss St. Leger, "breakfast for one at half-past six. Tell cook. Well, Mr. Falkoner, I'll be ready to give you a little of my time—not much, for I'm a very busy woman—after I have introduced Betty to her companions. Kiss your father now, Betty, and say good-night."

Betty went up and put her arms round Mr. Falkoner's neck.

"Promise that you'll see me in the morning before you go," she said, in a voice that choked with great agony.

"Yes, my darling, yes; it's all right, Betty. Cheer up, my love, cheer up. God bless you, my dear! Good-night. Now run."

Miss St. Leger stood at the other end of the

room, near the door, waiting. The moment Betty left her father she disappeared, and trotted down the stone corridor so fast that Betty had almost to run to keep up with her.

"We never waste a second in this house," she said, looking quickly at the child. "Life is a great deal too short; there's not a second to lose —not a second. Now then, here we are. This is the preparation room; this is where you will usually spend your evenings." Miss St. Leger opened a door, and Betty found herself in a long low-ceilinged, pleasant room. The floor was covered with linoleum, and there was a fireplace at either end. Tables stood at intervals down the center of the room, and on each table was a nice, bright-looking lamp. There were bookcases against the walls, and some large maps.

By the upper fireplace a group of girls were congregated.

"These are your companions," said Miss St. Leger, taking Betty's hand, and leading her rapidly up the room. "Now let me introduce you. My dears,"—Miss St. Leger turned to the group of girls, who eagerly faced her,—"this is your new companion, of whom you have heard me speak. Her name is Elizabeth Falkoner, and her father calls her Betty. I hope you will be all very kind to her, and will tell her the rules of the house, and do all you can to make her com-

fortable. Come here, Lotty Raynham. Betty is to be your room-mate, and I wish you to take her upstairs presently—in not less than ten minutes from now—and help her to unpack, and see that she goes to bed, for she must be tired. Betty, my dear, this is your new room-mate, Lotty Raynham; and this is Bella Steel; and this is Henrietta Gaunt; and these three girls are my own nieces, Elsie and Rose and Marian. Now, my dears, I leave you to make each other's acquaintance. Lotty, be sure you do all you can for Betty. Good-night, my dears; good-night."

Miss St. Leger whipped out of the room, and all the girls stood and stared at Betty.

CHAPTER V.

BETTY'S BLACK DRESS.

OTTY RAYNHAM was a very tall girl. She was built on a massive scale; she had large, dark, intelligent eyes, and a great expanse of forehead. Her heavy black hair was parted in the middle, and hung in a straight mass down her back. She was dressed in a dark-blue serge, and wore over it a holland pinafore of a somewhat childish make. Her long fingers were stained with ink, and at this moment a corresponding ink-stain adorned the tip of her somewhat up-turned nose. She was unconscious of this defect, however. Her eyes were fixed eagerly on Betty, who returned her gaze with interest.

"Now the rest of you keep off," said Lotty; "she can't take us all in to-night. We're all characters, more or less, and she can't take in more than one character at a time. She's my room-mate, and she's been put into my charge; therefore, I suppose, I may have the first of her. You had better come with me at once," she continued, "for if all your things are to be unpacked, we have plenty to do."

"It won't be necessary to unpack my things to-night," said Betty. "Hester, our servant, put what I should immediately require at the top of the trunk; everything else can wait."

"Hark! did you hear that?" said a sharp little voice. Betty turned in some alarm, and met the quizzical gaze and laughing eyes of Bella Steel. "Hark!" she repeated, putting up a warning finger, and glancing round with a comical expression at her companions. "Insurrection against Agatha has begun early."

"What do you mean?" said Betty. "Miss St. Leger did not introduce me to any girl of the name of Agatha."

"Because it's her own name, dear," said Henrietta, in a sweet voice. "She did not find it necessary to introduce you to herself."

"But you don't call her Agatha, surely?"

"When her back is turned, we invariably speak of her by that distinguished title. Oh, don't look like that, or you'll kill me; you really will."

Betty turned away with some dignity and a little disgust. She scarcely knew any girls, and had never met a schoolgirl in her life before.

"Come," said Lotty, taking her hand; "never mind Henny. She's a good soul, but something of a quiz."

"Before you go, pray explain one thing," said Marian, stepping forward, and placing herself in

front of Betty. "Are you called Eliza, Elizabeth, Betty, or Bess?"

"Oh, don't answer her!" said Lotty. "You know how mean it is to tease, Marian. Why do you do it? Come along, Betty, come along!"

"But are we to call her Princess Elizabeth, or merely humble Betty?" screamed Henrietta.

"Don't answer them," whispered Lotty to Betty "Here's the door; let's escape them."

As soon as they got into the corridor, Betty turned with flaming cheeks to her companion.

"What hateful girls!" she exclaimed. "I can't live here—I can't, really! I must speak to father; he must take me away in the morning. My things need not be unpacked, for I can't stay; I really, really can't!"

"Don't be a goose!" said Lotty. "The girls are well enough—they are only funny. If you don't take any notice, they'll soon settle down and leave you alone. I'll put you up to the rules of the place, if you'll let me, and you'll soon be very jolly, for all the rest of us are."

Betty made no reply. The soreness and pain at her heart made it extremely difficult for her to keep back her tears. She was the sort of child, however, who hated showing her emotions; and when they reached the pretty bedroom which she was to share with Lotty, she looked quite composed, only very pale and sad.

"Now," said Lotty, "here's our room; it's neat, isint it?"

"Oh, yes!" said Betty.

"Well, I don't suppose you ever slept in a nicer room. I can tell you the beds are snug, only we get so little of them. We're all supposed to be in bed by half-past nine, and out of bed, summer and winter, at six. It's awful, isn't it?"

"I can't get up at six," said Betty; "I'm not accustomed to it."

"Oh, my dear," said Lotty, "you must do what you're not accustomed to in this house. I dare say to-morrow you may be allowed half an hour's grace, because you'll be supposed to be tired after your journey; but the rules, my dear Betty, the rules have to be obeyed to the very letter. Up at six, prayers six thirty, lessons until half-past seven, breakfast from half-past seven till eight, an hour for play. Work from nine to eleven thirty, lunch brought to your desk in the shape of a hunch of bread and butter—right good, too, I can tell you, when you're starving. Walk at this time of year till one o'clock, dinner at quarter past, play from two to three. Lessons from three to five, tea, play for half an hour after; then preparation, supper at eight, and do what you like until prayers at nine. After prayers, bed and sweet sleep, much-needed repose. That's our life

In the summer, the hours are differently arranged. We have more time to be out, and we have several half-holidays. In the winter, we only have a half-holiday once a week, on Saturday, and during that time we have to put our wardrobes in order. I hate my wardrobe and clothes, and all that sort of thing; I love books beyond anything—don't you?"

"I have not read many," said Betty; "we had not many books at home, and mother did not care for the free library."

"Have you read Sir Walter Scott?"

"No, not yet."

"He's a treat for you; he's perfectly glorious. I have quite made up my mind that if ever I marry, it shall be a sort of man like the Master of Ravenswood. I thrill when I read about him. Do you ever thrill over your favorite heroes?"

"Well, I haven't any, you know," said Betty.

"Haven't you?" replied Lotty, with a sigh. "I hoped you were intellectual, from the shape of your eyes, and their expression. But after all, now I come to examine you closely, you have nothing to boast of in the way of a forehead, although you have a good back to your head. Turn round, and let me feel it. Yes, your qualities are well balanced, and that's everything. See what a brow I have. I quite thirst for learning. I mean to be a female professor if I live—that

is, if I don't meet the Master of Ravenswood. Agatha quite approves."

While Lotty was speaking, she sat on the edge of her own bed, dangling her long legs backward and forward, and occasionally pushing her thin fingers through her heavy black hair. Betty leaned against the wardrobe, puzzled, bewildered, and as yet only faintly interested.

"Where are you in your lessons?" said Lotty. "Are we likely to be in the same class?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Betty. "I have not learned in the ordinary way. Mother—mother taught me, and—and sometimes my father, and a master used to come in the evening for arithmetic and writing. I don't know a great deal; I—I have not had the life of other girls."

"Did you like your life?" asked Lotty.

"It was *lovely*."

There was a passion in the last word which made Lottie open her big eyes and stare at Betty.

"Why have you come here?" she asked, insensibly assuming a gentler tone.

"Because—because——"

"I mean," continued Lotty, "why has not your mother gone on teaching you?"

Betty's face turned white to the lips. Never—never in all the pain and agony of her loss had that pain been more acute than now. She struggled to state a simple fact boldly, but no words

would come from her firmly locked lips. With a feeling of desperation she took up the skirt of her black dress with its crape frills, and showed it to Lotty.

"Oh, what a brute I am!" said Lotty Raynham. She tumbled off the bed, and rushing up to Betty, took her in her big arms.

"Oh, you poor little thing, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed. "It's just like me to be so thoughtless with my tongue; but never mind. I'll tell the other girls, and they shan't quiz you. Now let's unpack, and then you must really go to bed, for you look fit to drop. This is my bed by the window, and this is yours near the fireplace. We don't have fires unless we are ill, and that no one ever is at Melville Hall. Now, here is your chest of drawers. Isn't it pretty? It's the sort of blue of a robin's egg. And this is the curtain, behind which you hang up your things. We'll soon have made everything shipshape. If you like to sit on the edge of your bed and rest, I'll put the things into your drawers."

"Oh, no, please," said Betty, "I'd rather unpack myself."

At this moment there came a sharp tap at the door, and before the girls had time to say "Come in," Miss St. Leger appeared.

"Betty, you ought to be in bed," she said. "Your father tells me that you are not very

strong, and must get accustomed by degrees to our life. Come, come; this trunk is not unpacked yet: you have been gossiping, you two. Lotty, I see it in your face. I am ashamed of you."

"I've been telling Betty the rules," said Lotty.

"But you might have unpacked at the same time. Come; I can see what this business will be, unless I take it in hand myself. Betty, my dear, look alive. Lotty, lend a hand. Now then, all the linen goes into this drawer; the bodies of the dresses into this; the hats, frills, handkerchiefs, knicknacks into this. Here, girls, I'll take out, and you stow away."

"Oh, please don't, please don't open that box!" said Betty, in a quiver of distress.

Miss St. Leger, who was down on her knees by the trunk, had just lifted out a card-board box. She looked up at Betty.

"Take it and put into the lower drawer," she said suddenly, and the little girl, with a great sigh of relief, stowed the precious box, with its relics of the past, out of sight.

In ten minutes' time the trunk was empty, and Betty's things as completely in their place as if she had been six months instead of a couple of hours at Melville Hall. The bell was then rung, and two servants appeared, who took the trunk out of the room.

"Now, that's right," said Miss St. Leger. "To bed this minute, my dear. Sleep well; good-night. I'll excuse your coming to prayers to-night, as you're so tired. Lotty, come with me."

Betty breathed a great sigh of relief when she found herself at last alone.

"My head is giddy," she said to herself. "It's impossible—it's *impossible* to believe that I'm settled here, and all my things unpacked. Oh, how hateful it all is!—oh, mother, mother, I never thought you so far—so dreadfully far away before! I don't like anybody here, not even Lotty, although she's the best. Oh, I do feel so frightened of Miss St. Leger, she's so sharp; she seems to snap me up so. I wonder if I shall wake so as to be sure to see father off. Oh, yes, of course I shall, for all the girls get up at six. What a good thing—they won't be able to keep me in bed, for I'm the lightest sleeper in the world. Well, I am tired! I'll just kneel down and say my prayers, and then tumble into bed. Oh, how dreary everything is, and mother, mother, darling, how far off you seem!"

Betty's pillow was wet with tears before she dropped to sleep, but she was young, and tired, and sleep is very merciful to tired children. When Lotty returned to the room, she saw that Betty was sound asleep, with her hand clasping her cheek. Her little face was white, and the

dark eyelashes rested on a very transparent cheek.

"Poor, rum little cove!" murmured Lotty. "Not intellectual, knows nothing at all, looks as if a breath would puff her out of the world. Mercy me, what a mess she has left her clothes in! Would not she catch it if Agatha came in? But she shan't—at least not to-night, poor baby—for I'll put them tidy for her, much as I loathe the job. Oh, Lotty Raynham, Lotty Raynham, what a model you are growing! I really expect the little wings will begin to bud if you go on much longer in this angelic strain."

CHAPTER VI.

PROMISES SHOULDN'T BE BROKEN.

HEN we awake in a strange place there often comes a moment of confusion and wonder when we cannot in the least remember where we are. Betty had slept soundly all through the long hours of the night. Her sleep was soft and full of peace—her tired little body never stirred, her eyelids never quivered. She slept, and she rested, and by and by she dreamed. Her dreams of course took her back to the old life. She thought she was preparing tea for her mother. She was kneeling at the fire toasting one of her own tea cakes, and mother was lying on the sofa looking at her. Mother was too weak to speak much, but Betty understood. There had always been the most perfect sympathy between this mother and child. The mother seemed to guess the child's thoughts; the child seemed to know all about the mother's. Their souls seemed to fit, their natures seemed to touch; there was never any jar or fret between them. Love made Betty obey, love made Mrs. Falkoner rule. It was a perfect union, this union between the mother and the child.

In her dream Betty toasted the tea cake; it turned to a perfect brown. She buttered it as she knew her mother best liked to have it, put it on the tea table, and brought it over to her mother's side. Betty and her mother took their tea together. Then the little girl knelt by her mother, and the mother put her arms round her, and a verse out of the Bible rushed into Betty's mind: "*As one whom his mother comforteth.*" She awoke out of her dream with these words on her lips.

"*As one whom his mother comforteth.*" She raised herself on her pillow and looked round the strange room in bewildered surprise. Mother was far away, the old home was gone, and she was at school—at hateful school. A great rush of pain filled her heart: she lay back on her pillow with a low moan.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear! it's much, much worse than I ever thought it could have been," she said to herself. "How can I endure this life? How can I stand those hateful girls? Oh, it did comfort me to go to Brompton Cemetery and look at mother's grave, but now I shall have no comfort. I shall have nothing to remind me of her. What am I to do? what am I to do?" She turned on her pillow, and now being wider awake, raised her head slightly, and looked with a kind of nervous fear toward Lotty's bed. It was empty, the

bed-clothes pulled well down to the bottom, and Lotty's night-dress folded and lying in its white frilled bag on the pillow.

"Why, what is the hour?" exclaimed Betty. "Surely, surely I have not overslept myself? Surely—oh, father, oh, father, that would be too cruel! Impossible—he promised—he *cannot* have gone!" She tumbled out of bed, and going to the mantel-piece, looked at the clock. It pointed to five minutes to seven. Father's cab was not to arrive until seven. If she dressed with frantic haste, she might have time to catch a sight of him. She rushed to the chair where Lotty had placed her clothes, and began to put them on with trembling fingers and frantic speed. The morning was a bitterly cold one, and Betty's little hands grew numb before she had half accomplished her task. She could not feel the buttons—she could not discover exactly where the eyes were placed. Never mind. The clothes were got on somehow, and she was fastening the black frock as best she could, and, it must be confessed, in a very lame fashion, when the sound of cab-wheels on the gravel outside smote on her ears.

"I won't wait another moment," thought Betty. "Who cares for tidy hair, or pinafore, or anything else? He'll be gone if I'm not sharp. Oh, I will, I must, I shall see him again!"

She opened the door of her bedroom and rushed down the corridor: the house was not only a large one, but was one of those queer old places which had been added to from time to time, and which was built on no settled plan. Betty had not noticed at all the way in which she had arrived at her room on the previous night, and now she could not find the broad central staircase, and in her distraction and hurry became quite confused. There was not a servant in sight—not a living soul to direct her. She found herself rushing helplessly down short flights of stairs and up other flights and along corridors which seemed to lead to nothing but bedrooms, hideous bedrooms. She clasped her hands frantically in dismay. It was awful, awful to be lost like this, and to feel that her father might be driving away from her. Going away without a kiss—without a good-by; going away from Betty's childhood and early youth—going away for six long, long years! Oh, it was maddening! She screamed aloud in her pain. Her scream brought unexpected relief. A rough-looking woman, with her dress turned up, and a pail of hot water and a scrubbing-brush in her hand, came into view.

"Whatever is the matter, miss?" she exclaimed.

"Please tell me how I can get down into the entrance hall!" exclaimed Betty. "My father is

going away, and I shall lose him if I'm not quick. Oh, tell me—tell me quick, quick!"

"Yes, dear," said the woman. She opened a door which Betty had not noticed, and pointed to the central stairs.

"Run down, dear, and you'll find yourself in the hall," she said. "Oh, poor little thing!" she exclaimed to herself. "I 'ope as she's in time, but I think the gentleman is gone."

Betty flew down the stairs. She was weak with terror and anguish. Miss St. Leger was standing in the hall. She stared as the little girl's wild apparition rushed past her.

"My dear child, where are you going?" she said.

"Father—I want him—I want to say good-by!" gasped Betty.

"My dear, we both thought it best not to wake you—you were so sound asleep. He left you a message. Come in here, and I will give it to you."

"He's not gone?" exclaimed Betty, rushing to Miss St. Leger and grasping her hands.

"Yes, indeed he is."

"How long ago? Speak!"

"The cab is just turning the corner of the avenue," said a servant who stood near.

Betty looked out. The hall door was open; a bitter wind was filling the house.

"I'll catch it up," exclaimed the child.

Before Miss St. Leger had time to draw breath

she was off—off like the wind itself—panting, rushing, calling, struggling. Oh, cruel cab—oh, cruel father! Betty is nearly dying in her efforts to get to you, and you do not even see her. The avenue was slightly uphill, and all the little girl's frantic efforts were in vain. She managed to keep up until she reached the lodge gates, and then she sank down, unable to speak or move, on the damp grass.

The lodge-keeper's wife came out and took Betty in; and when she had been seated by the warm fire for about ten minutes, Miss St. Leger herself came up to fetch her. Miss St. Leger was not severe now; she was quite kind and gentle. She came softly into the house, bearing Betty's hat and jacket in her arms. She put them on the little girl herself, and then taking her hand, led her down the avenue.

As they approached the house, Miss St. Leger turned and spoke.

"I know you feel this very much," she said, "and I am sorry that under the circumstances you were not awakened. But we did it for the best."

"It was a promise," gasped Betty—"a promise! Promises shouldn't be broken."

"It was my fault; your father wished to awaken you, but I begged of him not. I said I would explain; and he left you a message. What is the matter, my dear?"

"I wish to say something," said Betty, with a gasp. "I think you are perfectly hateful! I'm very sorry that I came here, and I don't mean to be good! I mean to be bad and wicked, and you'll never be able to manage me, so you had better send me back to father before he sails!"

Miss St. Leger stared at Betty while she was speaking. When the angry words had ceased, and the defiant eyes, so full of the most terrible misery, were raised to her face, instead of turning away, as Betty expected, she held out her hand.

"Fudge!" she said; "you don't know what you are saying, child. Come into my room and have some breakfast."

Betty followed her without a word.

Miss St. Leger's own private sitting room was well warmed with a large fire. It was not the room where Betty had supped the night before, but a smaller one. It was a very bright little room, and was rendered cheerful by flowers and by a loud-voiced canary, which sang in a cage by the window. The sun had come out now, and streamed in a great flood across Betty's pale face. Miss St. Leger took her to a big armchair near the fire; she took off her hat and jacket, and, putting her icy little feet on a footstool, began to rub them gently and firmly.

"I wish you wouldn't do it," said Betty, "when I——"

"When you hate me so?" said Miss St. Leger, looking up at her with a keen light in her blue eyes; "but you'll get over all that presently, and, meanwhile, as you are put in my care, your bodily wants must be attended to. If I do not look sharp, you may take a serious chill, and then you will be unwell, and I detest illness. Now, sit still, my dear. Is not that better?"

"Yes, thank you; I'm quite warm now."

"You want your breakfast."

Miss St. Leger stretched out her arm and pulled an old-fashioned bell-rope with vehemence.

A servant appeared.

"Alice, Miss Betty will breakfast with me. Bring up two new-laid eggs, some fresh toast, and some tea. Quick! we are both starving."

Alice disappeared and soon returned with an appetizing trayful of good things. Miss St. Leger helped Betty; then she cracked her own egg, and ate, and drank her own tea. While she was eating, she did not say a word. When she had finished her egg, she looked across the table at Betty, who had scarcely touched her food.

"This will never do," exclaimed Miss St. Leger. "No supper to speak of, last night—no breakfast this morning. You'll be ill, and that I cannot allow. If you don't eat up your egg and all that buttered toast, and drink your nice sweet tea, I shall come and feed you. Now you can take

your choice as to whether you wish to be fed by me or not."

Betty evidently made her choice very quickly. She gulped down the egg, ate her toast, and drank her tea, and, in spite of all her wishes to the contrary, felt soothed and benefited.

"Now," said Miss St. Leger, "you feel much as usual, don't you?"

"No!" said Betty.

"Well, I am sorry for you, but I don't know that I can aid you. You have a dark time to go through, and it is impossible for me to go through it for you. If you have stuff in you, you'll conquer yourself and be happy; if you are the poor sort, you'll fret for a good bit, and be a worry to yourself and everyone else in the house: it's for you to choose. I made a mistake this morning in not waking you, and I am sorry. I don't mean to tell a child like you that I am sorry again. Your father was relieved not to have a scene just when he was going off."

"There wouldn't have been a scene. How could he think it?" said Betty. "How *could* he think it?"

"Well, those were his words. He seems to be a very nervous sort of man: the sooner he gets into a good climate the better. He left you his dear love and blessing, and will write from town. You don't look fit for lessons this morning, so

perhaps you would like to sit here and write a letter to him. You will be able to relieve your feelings in that way, and you are welcome to say just what you please about me. If your letter is ready by half-past eleven, you can take it yourself to the post with Lotty Raynham and the other girls. Do you wish to write?"

"Yes, please," said Betty.

"Very well; you can go to your room and bring your writing materials down here. When you have finished your letter, you can read 'Alice in Wonderland'—it lies on that table—or go to sleep. I have not another moment to spare for you just now. Only just one word before I go to my business: I was your mother's friend. When we were both young we knew each other well, and loved each other dearly. Hers was the most perfect character I ever came across; you are a little like her, but not much. Go and fetch your writing materials and don't stare."

CHAPTER VII.

JASPER.

BETTY went slowly out of the room. Her legs felt quite weak, and her head giddy. Her heart was beating rather slowly now; there was no excitement whatever about her—the worst was over. Her mother was in her grave, and her father had gone away, without wishing her good-by, for six long years. With some little difficulty she reached her bedroom, which was at the present moment given over to two housemaids, who were going through their work with that sort of eager haste and speed which characterized all those people who were under Miss St. Leger's influence. The maids were not talking; they were working as if their lives depended on straightening out the sheets, and shaking out the pillows, and removing every speck of dust from the toilet tables. They were so busy that they did not even glance at Betty when she came in. She took her little writing portfolio from the top of the chest of drawers, and went downstairs. She re-entered Miss St. Leger's snug little sitting room,

and drawing up her chair to the table in the center prepared to write a letter. She thought beforehand that it would give her great relief to write to her father, but now, as she dipped her pen in the ink, she found it extremely difficult to arrange her thoughts. In the first place, she could speak of her feelings far better than she could write them: in the next, there seemed to be a cloud between her father and herself. How could he have broken the promise he had given her? How could he look at her in her sleep, and go away for six years, without that eager loving kiss from her lips? How could he drive up the avenue in that hateful cab, and never once turn round to see the little panting, struggling figure trying, and trying in vain, to reach him? Mother would never have treated her so. A hot flush came to Betty's cheeks, as she thought of this broken promise, which in truth had been made with so little thought by Mr. Falkoner that he had forgotten all about it. After a great deal of puzzled reflection, therefore, the letter, which was the outcome of all her agony, was written in the following words:

DEAR FATHER:

I was sorry not to say good-by. I got up too late, for I wasn't woke, and I dressed and ran up the avenue after you, but I couldn't catch you up, for you never looked at me. Miss St. Leger is kind. I don't like school; I'm not

doing any lessons this morning. The girls are horrid; Lotty is the best. I hope you'll write to me soon. Give my love to Hester.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH FALKONER.

A postscript was added to this, which revealed more than the whole of the rest of the letter:

I did want another kiss.—BETTY.

This short letter took a long time to write. When she had finished it, Betty saw that it was a quarter to eleven o'clock. She directed it carefully, and taking a stamp out of her purse, put it on it. Now it was ready for the post. She took it in her hands, looked at it with a dull sort of pain, and raising it to her lips just where the flap was secured, kissed it twice solemnly. She knew her father's hand must touch the flap in order to open the letter. She now sat down in the deep armchair, and took up "Alice in Wonderland." But she was too weary and full of pain to read, and soon her eyes closed, and she dropped asleep. In her sleep she dreamed that somebody—she did not know who—put strong arms about her, and kissed her, and laid her to rest on a firm and loving breast, and whispered to her: "*As one whom his mother comforteth.*"

She awoke with a start. Lotty Raynham and two or three other girls had come into the room.

"You're to come out with us now," said Lotty; "it will do you lots of good, and you won't be tired, for we're to have the donkey-cart."

"The donkey-cart?" said Betty, roused in spite of herself.

"Yes," said Henrietta, "the donkey-cart; the donkey's name is Jasper, and no one can manage him but me; if Lotty tries to poke him along, or Elsie, or anyone but me, he walks up the hedges. It is not at all pleasant to be in a donkey-cart when the donkey walks up the hedges, so he's generally left to my tender mercies. We ride turn and turn about, but as you are the new girl, and a sort of visitor, you shall stay in the cart all this morning."

"And I have brought down your things," said Lotty—"your hat, your jacket, your tie, your gloves—oh, and your muff, for you may catch cold sitting in that cart."

"Let me put on your boots, please, Betty," said Elsie St. Leger, looking at Betty out of two sweet eyes, and going down on her knees in front of her for the purpose.

Betty felt a sudden warm thrill going through her heart.

She had thought the girls horrid the night before, but now how changed they were, how kind and sympathizing! and in spite of all her trouble, it was exciting to think of driving in a

donkey-cart, with a donkey called Jasper, who walked up the hedges.

"I can't imagine how he does it," she said.

"How who does what?" asked Lotty.

"Jasper—how he walks the hedges."

"Well, come out and see. Henny, you must let me drive for a bit, in order to give Betty an experience. Why, what a ghost of a little thing you are, Betty! But we'll soon knock some color into you. Now, come along."

Betty got up almost briskly from her chair. The six other girls surrounded her as if in a sort of bodyguard. They seemed not to be able to make enough of her. The donkey-cart, a charming little governess cart on two big wheels, was standing by the front entrance; Jasper was pricking his long ears, and slowly switching his tail backward and forward. He was a good-sized, brown donkey, well groomed and fed. His harness was quite gay, made of tanned leather, with brass mountings. The brass shone like gold.

Betty was helped into the cart. Henny took the reins, and the five other girls started off at a brisk walk. They were soon overtaken by Jasper and the cart. He always started at full trot, as fast as ever he could go. It was delightful to feel the rapid motion, and the sensation of the keen air against your cheeks. You began by thinking Jasper as good as any pony—perhaps

better; but you very soon had cause to alter your first favorable opinion. Jasper only made this valiant start for the sake of keeping up appearances. He had certain points of the avenue where he invariably stood stock-still and looked around him. When Elsie or Rose or Lotty were driving, he then deliberately went into the grass to look for young ferns and other succulent roots. With Henrietta he simply fought.

"Hold my gloves, Betty," she exclaimed, when Jasper made his first abrupt pull up. "Now then, don't be frightened; he must go on. He's the knowingest donkey in England. I shall try him with firm words first, before I proceed to blows."

"Oh, you couldn't beat him!" said Betty.

"Couldn't I? You wait and see. Oh, I don't really hurt him, but I give him a little sting: he's so naughty that he deserves it; but we'll try words first."

"Hi! Jasper! Gee up, old boy, gee up!" Henrietta stood upright in her cart and pulled the reins vigorously.

Jasper cocked back one ear, and made a lunge in the direction of a young bulb in the grass.

"No, no; none of that," said Henrietta. "Now then, go on at once, or I'll fetch Agatha."

To Betty's astonishment, Jasper seemed to understand this threat, for he moved slowly forward with a drooping head.

"*Surely* he doesn't know what you say?" exclaimed Betty, immensely interested.

"Oh, doesn't he? He understands Agatha, and she understands him. He's the best-tempered, most obliging donkey in the whole of Dorsetshire when Agatha drives him. Now then, that's better. Gee up, good Jasper. Capital donkey, noble steed; well done. Trot a bit, if you please, my beauty. He's awfully vain," continued Hetty, "and wants no end of butter."

"What do you mean by butter?" asked Betty.

"Oh, flattery! I'm going to talk about him now in a loud voice. He keeps up a steady trot, with one ear a little pushed back while I talk about him. Now, I'm going to begin. I must talk loud, for he pretends to be deaf. He loves to hear pretty things about himself. Don't mind, or make any remark, if I say some things in a low voice to you. The loud words are for him.

"Did you ever see such a handsome donkey, Betty? (Awfully conceited). He's so large, and such a good color, and so well behaved. I was saying to you, Betty, that Jasper was a very good donkey. (Intolerable, except when I manage him.) Is he not going well now? Agatha shall be told, and she will give him a carrot if he does not stop once all the way home."

Jasper trotted steadily and nicely, and Betty sank back in the cart in fits of laughter.

"Don't let him hear you, or all is up," whispered Henny. "He is frightfully sensitive about being laughed at."

"Oh, I think he's a dear donkey," exclaimed Betty, "but he's so killingly funny. Oh, what's that? what's the matter?"

"He has stopped," exclaimed Henny. "He heard you. Now we *shall* have a job. I'm sure I must sting with the whip this time."

The other girls had now come up. Jasper was standing in the middle of the road with his head a little bent, and his forefeet touching. They all spoke to him and argued with him, but he did not pay the least attention. Henny took out the whip and administered one sharp stroke. Jasper made for the hedge; there was a broken mud wall at the back; he raised his eyes, saw a tempting bit of grass above his head, and deliberately climbed. The governess cart seemed to hang in mid-air, and poor Betty screamed.

"Oh, I'll get out!" she said. "Oh, it's dreadful!" Lotty helped her to alight. Jasper ate his grass slowly, and then descending, stood once more in the road.

"I don't think he's a nice donkey," said Betty. "I did at first, but I don't now. How can you stand his tricks?"

"He's the dearest donkey in the world," said Henrietta. "He's the plague and the pleasure of our lives. It was all your fault about that grass. You laughed, and he couldn't stand that. Now then, Jasper, my darling, are you going to be good and get your carrot? Do you hear me? your nice red carrot, Jasper; or must I tell Agatha?"

Jasper pricked his ears, and his forefeet no longer kept close together.

"He's going to be good. He's a pet," said Henny. "Jump in, Betty; quick, quick!"

Betty almost danced into the cart. It was quite exhilarating. Henny hopped after her, took up the reins, and jerked them. Jasper nearly flew; he was angelic; he stopped for nothing.

"Are we not going too fast now?" said Betty. "The other girls seem so far behind."

"We can't stop him," whispered Henny. "He's running away at present; he's doing it for fun. He'll stop after a bit again, when he thinks he has earned his carrot. There's nothing in the way, no vehicle of any sort; I shall just give him his head. He loves to get his head, for then he sees that he is trusted. Jasper has a great and complicated nature."

"How nice this cart is," said Betty, "and what pretty, bright harness!"

"I should think so. We polish it all up ourselves, every bit of it; we do everything for Jasper, except clean out his stall. He's treated just like a pony, and gets a feed of oats every day. We subscribe for his oats; Miss St. Leger does the rest. We take week about to groom him, and we polish his harness, and keep the governess cart clean."

"But did not a boy bring him round to the door?"

"Yes, that's Edward; he's the under gardener. He has nothing to do with Jasper, as a rule; the girl who is in charge, as a rule, goes and harnesses him, and brings him round. Oh, I cannot tell you what a joy he is in the summer, and how far we go with him. Now I expect it is time to turn. Oh, don't you want to post your letter?"

"Yes, please."

"Well, here's the post-office. He must stop now, but I'll manage him. A little more flattery will do it. Forgive me if I speak rather loud."

Henny raised her voice suddenly to a sort of shriek.

"You would not believe how clever Jasper is," she said. "He'll stop now of his own accord at the post-office. Watch; you'll see he will."

The donkey was still going at a great pace, but at Henny's words back went that conceited left ear, and as they approached the little post-

office at the beginning of the rural village, he drew up with an air of triumph.

"Darling!" said Henny, "didn't I say so?—Give me the letter, Betty, and hold the reins. I must go in, for I have to buy some stamps."

Henrietta was absent a couple of minutes. When she came back, there was no sign of the donkey-cart; she looked round her for a moment in dismay, then burst into a hearty langh. Poor Betty, pale with terror, was clinging on to the bottom of the cart. Jasper had gone into the middle of the street, and being thirsty, had decided to take a drink from the village pump. For some reason he did not approve of the water in the wide basin which surrounded the pump, but preferred that which kept dripping into a shallow cup at the top. To get at this he had to put his fore-legs upon the basin, and poor Betty lay at the bottom of the cart, thinking her last hour had come.

Henny soon came to the rescue, and all was right.

Jasper was a model donkey all the way home, and Betty wondered, as she re-entered the house, what could have happened, and why she suddenly felt both hungry and in good spirits.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVEN MAIDS.

IN a fortnight's time, Betty Falkoner felt as if she had lived all her life at Melville Hall. She seemed to be part and parcel of the place. The old life in London was shadowy and far away. Was it possible that she had ever been a sad child standing by a parlor window looking out into a dismal street? Was it possible that she had ever found time hang heavy on her hands, that she had yawned from dreariness, and from having nothing to do? Was it possible that she had ever in the whole course of her existence gone simply through the day at her own sweet will and pleasure, learning her lessons when she liked best, taking her meals when she chose, going out often by herself? Was it possible that she, Betty Falkoner, had gone to the confectioner's to choose cakes and scones and fresh eggs for mother, and then that she had toasted the cakes, and boiled the eggs, and sat by mother, and read to her, and kissed her, and loved her? Was it possible that ever a day could have come in the life of this little

person when she had bought flowers alone, and driven alone in an omnibus for several hours, and then had sat upon a grave and put flowers there, and felt forlorn and empty of heart, and yet with it all, strangely comforted and strangely glad? For by mother's grave she had felt close to her; and the white camellias that meant the angels, and the red camellias that meant mother's love and hers, seemed to bring their meanings with them and to surround her with a sad sort of peace.

Betty used to wonder, whenever she had a moment to wonder at all, if these things could really have been, for now a fortnight had gone by, and all, all was changed. Betty was in a house where no one had her own way for a single minute; where there was not a second of time left unemployed; where from morning to night there was a sort of rush—not an unpleasant rush, but still a rush to get things done. The getting things done seemed to be the whole object of existence; there was never time for talk. Even at night there was no time. Bed was meant to be slept in. "There was something even to be done in bed," thought Betty. It was your duty to sleep in bed, as it was your duty to dress, and eat, and learn, and walk, and play every single moment of the long hours while you were up.

Betty fought with the life for a little, but soon

Miss St. Leger's strong will conquered her. She did not love her governess, but she yielded to the inevitable. In spite of herself, almost against her will, the new life interested her, it was so full, so fresh, so—yes, so absorbing. Betty was forced to work hard, for Miss St. Leger, after a sharp, short examination, during which the little girl trembled and colored and almost cried, pronounced gravely that she knew nothing at all.

"Oh, yes, you can read," said Miss St. Leger, with scorn—"that is, you can read after a fashion to yourself, but you can't read aloud properly, so don't think it. You never take your stops as you ought, you clip your words in a most shameful way, and at the end of every sentence you drop your voice. Yes, my dear, I state facts. We'll soon get over this, of course. At present I can give you no marks for reading aloud."

"I always thought I knew a little bit of French," said Betty, in a choking voice.

"You *thought* you knew French!" said Miss St. Leger. "Let me tell you, Betty, that I dislike that expression. You either know a thing, or you do not know it. The words, 'I thought,' indicate feebleness of mind: don't say them again. As regards French, it will not be necessary, for the little you imagine you know must be unlearned. Your accent, my dear, is excruciating. When Mlle. Henri gives you your French

lesson, I shall sincerely pity her. You seem to have a little natural talent for drawing, but I don't want you to practice it until you are more up in the subjects which should comprise an ordinary Englishwoman's education. I am not going to put you in any class for at least six months. You will begin English history at the time when the Romans took possession of the country, and work your way up slowly and thoroughly. Geography, grammar, general information, a little easy science, French of course, and music—by which I mean, steady playing of scales and exercises on the pianoforte—will fully occupy your time. Now, my dear, go and sit down. Don't be discouraged. You will take about a year in being broken properly in; at the end of that time I may be able to say that you know a little."

"Well, how did you get out of it? what did Agatha say?" questioned Lotty in a whisper, as Betty seated herself by her desk.

"Don't ask me," replied Betty. "She was hateful. It isn't true what she says."

"That you know nothing?" laughed Lotty. "I know; she said much the same to me, when first I came. Don't you mind her a bit; I'm certain you're clever, because your head is so well balanced. Now, I must go on with my history. I think the reign of Queen Elizabeth quite absorbing. Let the pleasure of it soak into you, Betty;

then you'll love to fill your brain. I like to cram mine."

Lotty turned away; her elbows rested on her desk, her fingers were poked into her ears, her lips murmured softly, and her fine eyes were lowered over her book with an expression of rapt attention. Betty found it useless to sigh; she had a small lesson to prepare in a few moments, and she must give her mind to it. After a time she found that she had conquered her difficulties; she had seized the main facts, and got what meaning she could out of the dry words. Then she raised her head, and looked at the other girls. They were all absorbed in work, for this was the preparation hour, and the sooner it was over the more time there would be for that friendly bickering, that idle gossip, which was the girls' delight and solace. All the girls were now kind to Betty. They no longer quizzed or teased her. There was something about her sweet little face which appealed to the best in each of them; she was outspoken and honest, and her remarks amused them. As far as possible, they tried to help her and to make things a little easy for her.

Miss St. Leger was helped in her tuition by Mlle. Henri, a Parisian lady who lived in the house, and who was popular, after a certain fashion, with the girls. She was a pale little woman of between thirty and forty. She had

thin hair the color of hay, light-brown eyes, and a somewhat sallow face. She was colorless both in appearance and in manner, but her mouth was rather hard; and Lotty was fond of saying, when she wanted to be very confidential, that she did not trust Mlle. Henri.

A fat old German professor, Herr Schmidt, used to come over once a week from Dorchester to instruct the girls; there was also a music mistress, who came twice a week for the same purpose. Miss St. Leger managed all the rest of the instruction herself. She made the girls thoroughly comfortable; supplied them with the best food; saw that their rooms were well furnished, and their sitting rooms thoroughly warmed. She did not leave a stone unturned for their real benefit, but yet none of them gave her their full confidence; she was the best of women, but up to the present she seemed to be unable to inspire love.

Betty had promised her father that she would do her best at school. She found her best very uphill work; still she was conscientious, and although she hated her lessons, and was not especially quick in taking them in, she worked hard at them, and no one could accuse her for a moment of inattention. Her companions puzzled her a good deal. She had never been with girls before, and their varying characters, which she could

quickly read, gave her a great deal of consideration when she had a moment to think at all. Lotty Raynham was Betty's favorite, and indeed few girls possessed finer natures or nobler instincts than Lotty. She had a great deal of real talent, a great deal of enthusiasm, a warm and affectionate heart. She was the essence of truth, and scorned deceit or concealment of any kind. She did not care a scrap about her personal appearance, and often gave offense on account of her bluntness. She was full of purpose, and as she expressed it to Betty, "quite reveled in learning."

"I like to wade in it," she used to say. "I like to spread out my arms like a strong swimmer. It is glorious to test one's strength; I do that when I get out of my depth. Yes, I love learning for itself, and also because I've a reason for working hard; a very, very important, almost a violent reason. I'll tell you some day when—when I think you can bear it."

"Oh, I can bear it now," said Betty. "Tell it to me now, dear Lotty. Of course I can bear anything that you say."

"Another time," said Lotty. "On Sunday afternoon you can ask me. I'll walk with you on Sunday afternoon, and then perhaps I'll tell you if I'm in the humor, but it's such a secret that I like to hug it. When you know it, I won't

be able to hug it. I have to consider that point before I reveal it."

Betty asked no more questions, but she thought a good deal of the next Sunday afternoon, and wondered what Lotty's secret could be.

Henrietta Gaunt came up to speak to Lotty at this moment, and the two girls went away together. Henrietta, or Henny, as her companions invariably called her, was in some ways the most interesting girl in the school. She was a gentle little creature, beautifully made, and with a lovely little face colored somewhat like a piece of porcelain. Her eyes were blue like speedwells, and her abundant hair was of a soft fluffy yellow. This gentle-looking little being, however, had a will of iron; she invariably got her own way; and in whatever company she was, she managed to come to the front and to take a foremost place. She was full of ambition, and in some ways was not too scrupulous; she could be mischievous also on occasions. She was admired in a sort of way, and also feared by her companions. No one felt any great love for her, although no girl in the school would wish for a moment to offend her. Mlle. Henri was particularly fond of Henny, and on many occasions the two would be seen walking together in earnest conversation. After these walks and talks, Henny would hold her head very high, and

look particularly confident and supercilious. She had no real talent, but she was smart; she managed to acquire learning very readily, and was universally praised by her teachers for her smart replies. Miss St. Leger often contracted her brows, and looked at Henny in a puzzled way. None of her pupils were so sweet and polite to her, and yet, somehow, she did not feel sure of her.

Bella Steel was a thoughtless, light-hearted girl, easily led in any direction; delighting in goodness one day, and reveling in mischief the next. She and Henny were about the same age; they were sometimes violent friends, but on a very small provocation they could be equally violent enemies.

Miss St. Leger's own three nieces, Elsie, Rose, and Marian, aged respectively fifteen, fourteen, and thirteen, were pretty everyday girls. Elsie was very kind-hearted, rather good-looking, and with average abilities. Rose was decidedly stupid, given to crying, and the butt of the school; Marian was Elsie's counterpart, and in many ways her echo. These girls, although Miss St. Leger's nieces, were never singled out for special favor.

On the whole, the seven girls who now, Sunday after Sunday, might have been seen going with Miss St. Leger to the primitive little church at

the head of the village High Street, were as fair specimens of young English girlhood as could be seen anywhere. One of Miss St. Leger's peculiarities was to dress them, not exactly in a sort of uniform, but with a certain resemblance to each other. She was not a woman who cared a great deal for personal appearance, but she had a great and almost passionate love for uniformity. Now, the young hate uniformity, and Miss St. Leger's little fads about the precise shape of a hat, or the cut of a cloak, annoyed Henrietta, made Bella cross, and Elsie sulky. Lotty did not care in the least what she wore. She once remarked to Betty that she knew she looked particularly bad in the sage-green cloak which Miss St. Leger insisted on her wearing all during the present winter.

"But what of it?" she continued; "who's to look at me? If it pleases Agatha, it's all the same to me. I can't make out why Henny and Bella and Elsie make such a fuss over their clothes."

"Never mind them now," said Betty, in a coaxing voice; "let's forget all about dress, and all about worries. You know it's Sunday afternoon, and you were going to tell me your secret."

"That secret that I hug to my breast?" said Lotty, looking down at Betty, from her own superior height. "What a persistent little thing you are! Here, take my arm; why, I could carry

you, you're such a slender being: but you look better already, Bettina, you really do."

"I feel better," said Betty, in a frank voice. "I can't imagine why I do feel better, but it is a fact that I do."

"You speak in such a melancholy tone," said Lotty, "that perhaps you'd rather feel worse, eh?"

"Well," said Betty, with a sigh, "I did always think that I was affectionate, and had a great deal of heart; but perhaps I haven't."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't wish for any more heart," said Lotty; "it's the greatest nuisance in existence. As for you, you poor Betty, you're overladen with it."

"But I did not think," continued Betty, "that I'd be happy and almost—almost contented, after parting with father only three weeks ago."

Lotty gazed attentively at Betty.

"You're braced!" she said, in an emphatic voice; "and nothing in the world could do you more good. You were as limp as a rag when you came here; but that's the effect Agatha always has on people. She's like a good rousing east wind on a sunshiny day. She's awfully stimulating; don't you think so?"

"Well, I never *rushed* so in my life," said Betty. "But now, Lotty, don't let's talk about Miss St. Leger; I want to know your secret. Why do you want to wade in knowledge?"

"For the unadulterated love of it, my dear; my soul thirsts to acquire."

"But you said you had a secret."

"So I have."

"And you promised to tell me."

"I did," said Lotty. She paused now, looked at Betty, and her face became thoughtful.

"I have wanted to tell you, and yet I dread to tell you, Betty Falkoner," she said. "The fact is, I—I have a mother."

Betty colored.

"Have you?" she said. "I—I'm so glad," she continued after a pause; "tell me about her, please."

"You are a dear little thing," said Lotty. "Now, come along; I see we'll be famous friends. The fact is, I have been afraid to talk of my mother to you, and yet I have been just pining and pining to do so; you'd love her if you knew her. Father is dead, and I have three brothers, and I'm the only girl; and mother has had such slavery, Betty, to get us educated. You never knew anything like the way she has denied herself. Even now she lives in such a shabby way; and she teaches, and she writes a little, and she paints a little, and she even goes to read to people who pay her for doing it, and every penny and every half-penny is scraped together just to educate those three bouncing

boys and me. You can guess now what my secret is?"

"No," said Betty, "I don't quite guess; please tell it to me."

"Well," said Lotty, coloring herself, although she was generally so pale, "Miss St. Leger says that I have more talent than most girls, and when I leave here I'm to go either to Newnham or Girton, and then I shall go in for the classical tripos."

"What in the world is that?" interrupted Betty.

"It's what men do," said Lotty. "It's the exam for the degree."

"But I don't know what a degree is.'

"Oh, you poor small child! Well, I'll explain it some day. The tripos is a long way off, but afterward," said Lotty, her great eyes shining, "there'll be a home for mother, and she shan't work, not even a quarter of an hour a day, for I'll do everything. The darling, the dear darling! She shall have a cozy time then."

Betty made no reply. Lotty bent down to look at her, and saw that her eyes were lowered, and her lips trembled.

"Look here, Betty," she said, in her hearty voice: "I didn't want to tell you this, for I thought it would pain you; but you have a lot of stuff in you, I can see. I'm sure you'll be a

splendid girl some day, and I want you to feel sure that I'm going to be a great big friend to you; and mother shall be a friend to you too—she will, when I tell her about you. Nothing ever drew me to anyone, Betty, like that little black frock of yours, and those sad eyes; and some day you shall tell me about your mother in return for my big secret."

"I'll tell you now," said Betty, with a sort of gasp. "O Lotty, I do love you, and it comforts me wonderfully. I'll tell you about mother now, if you'll let me."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LETTER.

OTTY and Betty were late home from their walk that afternoon. When they came in Mlle. Henri met them in one of the corridors, darted an angry glance at them, and told them in her rapid French that she would report them to madame, as she invariably called Miss St. Leger. Betty colored, and Lotty tossed her head in the air.

"Never mind her," whispered the elder girl to her little companion; "we're only a quarter of an hour late, and if she wasn't such a pig, she'd say nothing about it."

"But Miss St. Leger would know herself if we were late for tea," said Betty.

"My dear," replied Lotty, "Agatha is out for the day. Of course we ought to have been in time, but somehow it was fascinating to walk as we did, and talk as we did, and of course we forgot horrid school and the proprieties. Well, never mind! I'll explain everything to Agatha, if she blames me. Mademoiselle would not tell of anybody else, but she hates me, and has always

done so. I can see for your comfort, Betty, that you are also going to be in her black books."

Betty did not reply, and the rest of the day passed without any special event.

The next morning, however, a great surprise was in store for all the girls of Melville Hall. Miss St. Leger, after reading prayers, asked the girls to remain for a few moments in the hall, where she invariably conducted the service.

"I want to say something," she remarked. She waited until the servants withdrew, and then stood by her desk. She was always a hard-looking, rather withered little woman, but there was something pathetic, and almost forlorn about her, as she stood there, and looked full with her honest blue eyes at the seven fresh young faces all gazing in wonder at her.

"Mademoiselle, you need not stay," said Miss St. Leger.

Mlle. Henri immediately left the hall.

"I have some very unexpected tidings for you, my dear girls," said Miss St. Leger. "When I was out yesterday, I received news of a painful character. The news altogether relates to myself and my own concerns, and only affects me in this way, that I must go away for a time."

"Go away!" echoed Lotty with a start. Betty colored and gazed at Miss St. Leger; Henny darted a quick glance of almost concealed triumph

and pleasure at the three St. Legers and Bella Steel; and all other eyes were fixed on Miss St. Leger.

"Yes," repeated the mistress, "I must go away for some days. A friend of mine, a Miss Marshall, will arrive here this evening to look after the housekeeping and the servants, and mademoiselle in my absence will be head of the school."

"How long must you be away, Miss St. Leger?" asked Henny, in her sweetest voice.

"I cannot tell you, my dear. I hope I may only have to absent myself from you for a few days, but it is possible that I may have to be much longer from home. I wish to add," she continued, again looking full at the girls, "that the business which takes me away means a great trouble and anxiety to me. I should like, before I go, to get your assurance, girls, that you, on your part, will lighten the burden for me."

"In what way? What do you mean?" asked Lotty.

"If," continued Miss St. Leger, "you seven girls would act faithfully to me; if I were certain that you would be diligent in your lessons, and good and honorable in your conduct; that you would not incite each other to mischief; that you would act, in short, in my absence as you do when I am by, my trouble would be so much

lightened that I should go away with a comparatively light heart."

None of the girls spoke. Henny fidgeted with her feet, and darted a bright quick glance both to right and left. Lotty held her head high, and looked straight before her. Betty's eyes were fixed full on Miss St. Leger.

"I don't," said the mistress, looking at them again, and now speaking stiffly, "appeal to your affection, but I do to your honor. Will you, as honorable English girls, promise to act in my absence as you would in my presence?"

Betty, whose color had been coming and going all the time Miss St. Leger was speaking, now took a step or two forward, and said impulsively: "I promise—I promise most faithfully."

A few muttered words, too indistinct to be heard, sounded in the air behind her. Lotty said, "I hate underhand ways: I think you may trust me." No one else said anything.

Miss St. Leger waited for another moment with puckered brows, then clearing her throat, she looked full at Lotty and Betty.

"Thank you, my dear," she said to the younger girl. "I know I can trust you, Lotty," she continued, giving her tall pupil a keen glance; "as to the rest of you, my dears, I must take silence to mean consent."

"Of course we mean to be good," said Henny

then, "but it seems as if you didn't trust us, to put it in that way."

"Does it? Very well, we'll say no more about it. Indeed, I have no time to say anything more; I must be out of this house and on my way to Dorchester by ten o'clock. You can now go to the schoolroom, girls."

One by one the girls went up to Miss St. Leger, and shook hands with her; they then filed out of the room.

There was no time for talk, for lessons were to begin immediately, but Betty felt, she could not tell why, that all the girls, even Lotty, looked at her with displeasure. She tried to hope that this was not the case, for she was intensely sensitive as to the feelings of her companions toward her, and endeavored to drown thought over the intricacies of a French lesson, which she was preparing for mademoiselle.

She was just "getting her heart into it," as she said, when the parlor-maid Alice opened the schoolroom door and came in.

"Miss Falkoner, will you come to Miss St. Leger for a moment?" she said.

Betty got up and left the room. Every girl watched her as she walked away, and mademoiselle was heard to titter audibly.

Betty found Miss St. Leger in the pretty little breakfast room, where she had taken her on that

first dreadful morning. It was not a month from that time, and yet it seemed to Betty as if years must have passed.

Miss St. Leger was standing by a table, busily cutting sandwiches.

"Is that you, Betty? Shut the door," she said, in a sharp voice.

Betty came in, and stood at the other side of the table.

Miss St. Leger went on buttering bread, and putting quantities of mustard on thin slices of ham. Betty looked at the mustard with fascinated eyes, and wondered if anyone could eat such awfully hot sandwiches.

"You think I'm putting on too much, eh?" said the governess, giving her a quick glance. "When you come to my age, you need stimulation. Mustard stimulates."

"Yes," said Betty. "Can I do anything to help you? Shall I tie up the sandwiches?"

"No; stand there until I am ready to speak to you."

Betty stood.

Miss St. Leger seemed to fly at her work. Betty's gaze was never removed from her active fingers. The sandwiches were made—a very small supply. They were tied up in neat tissue-paper, and slipped into Miss St. Leger's little traveling bag.

"Now, my dear," said the governess, "come here. Do you see this davenport?"

"Yes," said Betty.

"Here," continued Miss St. Leger, "is note-paper, here are stamps, here are envelopes. You can write a fairly good letter, can you not?"

"I don't know—perhaps so. I'm very slow over it."

"You can take your own time. Betty, my dear, you are the only girl in this school whom I absolutely and fully trust."

"Oh, don't say that," exclaimed Betty, almost crying. "There never was a nobler girl than Lotty."

"Don't contradict!" said Miss St. Leger, in a sharp voice. "I don't wish to say a word against Lotty. I have the highest opinion of her, but she keeps her head in the clouds. Now you have got common sense. I may be away for some time, Betty, or, as I said just now, I may, on the other hand, return in a few days. What I wish you to do in the case of my prolonged absence is to come to this room once a week and write me a long letter. I don't ask you to betray your companions, but I want you to write just anything that comes into your head. No one will read the letter except me. Write to me once a week, Betty, in case I have to stay away. Now go back to the school room. Good-by, my dear."

"But I won't know your address," said Betty.

"Miss Marshall will supply you. Don't make mountains out of mole-hills: good-by."

Betty, to her surprise, felt a kiss from Miss St. Leger's lips on her cheek. She returned to her lessons feeling very uncomfortable.

Try as she would, she could not give her full mind to her work. Her thoughts would wander back to Miss St. Leger. Why did she say that she trusted her, and her only? Why did she ask her to write to her once a week? Betty hated writing. She was too young, too unfamiliar with the art of letter-writing, for her thoughts to flow freely. Even to her father and to Hester, whom she dearly loved, her letters would express nothing of her real sentiments; how much more difficult it would be to write to Miss St. Leger. Why, oh, why was she chosen for this unpleasant business? A kind of instinct told her that the other girls would dislike her for it.

"Well, of one thing I am resolved," said Betty to herself, "I'll not do it without telling them. They'll all know before the day is out that I have got to write to Miss St. Leger, and then they may think of me what they like."

"A penny for your thoughts, Betty," said a gay voice in her ears. She turned and met the laughing eyes of Elsie St. Leger.

"I'll tell you afterward," said Betty quickly.

"I can't get this dreadful irregular verb into my head ; please don't interrupt me."

Elsie tossed her curls and bent over her own book.

Just then the sound of wheels was distinctly audible on the gravel outside ; they were loud at first, then faint, then the noise altogether disappeared.

To Betty's amazement, Elsie flung down her book with a clap, and looked across at Henny, who smiled. The smile passed from face to face like a flash of mischievous gladness. Neither Lotty nor Betty shared it. Betty felt furiously angry. Lotty had observed nothing. As usual, her fingers were pressed to her ears—her shoulders were hitched up high. She was bending over a difficult Latin exercise with knitted brows, absorbed in thought.

"She is wading," thought Betty to herself, "but I do wish she'd look up and say something. She could compel the rest of the girls to be at least outwardly respectful. How horrid it's all going to be! I know we're going to have an awful time ; and oh, that fearful letter! why *has* it been given me to do?"

Monday was a specially busy day at Melville Hall, for both Herr Schmidt and the music mistress, Miss Price, came from Dorchester to give lessons. When the hour for recreation came,

mademoiselle took all the girls out for a stiff walk. Henny walked at one side of her, and Elsie St. Leger at the other. Bella Steel took forcible possession of Lotty, and Betty, rather to her own disgust, was left to the mercy of Rose and Marian St. Leger. It was a particularly blustering day in early March. The wind blew keenly over the moors, and drove the tears into Betty's eyes; Rose had a headache, and was not inclined to talk to anyone; and Marian, who was nothing if she was not an echo, took her cue from Elsie. Elsie had been very short in a reply she made to one of Betty's questions in the hall just before starting, and now Marian was equally short and uncommunicative.

Betty walked on, trying to forget the presence of her two uninteresting companions. Having really no one to talk to, her thoughts flew back to the old life which had so completely vanished away, and the sad, wistful look which always came to her little face when in repose was very manifest on it. Neither Rose nor Marian, however, was the sort of girl to feel the least interest in Betty and her sadness. She stopped to look at an early primrose which had been hardy enough to come out in one of the hedges; immediately her two companions linked their arms together and walked on in front, without taking the least notice of her. She was rather glad than other

wise to be rid of their unpleasing society, and walked slowly along, examining all the signs of spring in the hedgerows with intense interest. She was absorbed in her own reflections when Lotty, Bella Steel, mademoiselle, and her two companions, came up in a body.

"Then that's capital," said Bella. "You agree, don't you, Lotty?"

"Oh, yes, if you all wish it," answered Lotty, in her dreamiest tone. "Mademoiselle, of course, can do as she wishes."

"That's what I think, *petite*," said mademoiselle, in her most rapid and Frenchified manner. They none of them noticed Betty, who stood and gazed after them, puzzled at the scraps of conversation which now and then reached her. She was aroused by the sharp voice of Marian St. Leger.

"Well, little eavesdropper," she said, in her most chilling tone, "how long do you intend to stand there with your mouth open?"

"It isn't open," said Betty indignantly. She joined the two St. Legers, and the whole party got home in time for dinner.

Mademoiselle presided at dinner, and the meal was an undoubtedly cheerful one. There was no restraint, and what Betty principally noticed was that the sense of hurry seemed to have completely left the place. There seemed all of a

sudden to be abundance of time for everything. Mademoiselle began by telling the girls that she would excuse their speaking French. She said she considered it only fair that they should teach her a little English for a change. She was afraid that her English might become rusty; she would therefore take a lesson in that adorable tongue forthwith.

Even Lotty smiled when mademoiselle said this in her prettiest manner, and the other girls, with the exception of Betty, looked at her with adoration.

A lively chatter of all sorts of nonsense fol lowed. As Lotty joined in, Betty thought she might follow her example, and she could not help feeling the sense of leisure very refreshing.

As they were all preparing to leave the table, mademoiselle stood up, and waving her hand in a theatrical manner, looked down the table.

"I am about to make a very little speech," she said. "I of all things desire the happiness of my most dear pupils."

"Yes, that you do, mademoiselle," interrupted Henny, while the three St. Legers clapped their hands.

"Don't put me out, my beloved Henriette," interrupted the governess; "your strange, cold tongue is not yet acquaint to me. Still, I love the English; their hearts are true and brave.

My dear friend madame has put me in control of this house. She has said, 'Manage these young dear demoiselles, and, above all, make them happy.' Madame likes work: I, too, think work adorable; but I also dearly love the pleasures of this little life. I say we will have pleasure to-day. We will do our German, and practice diligently on our piano; afterward we will have tea, and then we will all go into Dorchester to the great circus which is exhibiting there to-night."

"Isn't it jolly?" said Lotty, with sparkling eyes.

"You will do it, then?" said mademoiselle. "We can hire the fly in the village if each of you young ladies will subscribe a shilling apiece—that is very little for so great a pleasure; and I know a friend in Dorchester who is acquaint with one of the managers of the circus, and who will admit me and my dear adorable charges free of cost."

The clapping and cheers which followed this exciting announcement could scarcely be surpassed, and mademoiselle's face fairly beamed with triumph as she looked from one girl to another.

"Ah, a little pleasure is *so* good!" she said, in her emphatic way, while her brown eyes danced.

CHAPTER X.

MADEMOISELLE'S RULE.

HERE was still half an hour before Herr Schmidt would give his lesson. This half-hour in the day's routine was always devoted to recreation, and the girls stood about in groups, eagerly discussing mademoiselle and the pleasure in store for them. To Bettie's surprise, she noticed that no one disapproved of this sudden infringement of Miss St. Leger's rules. She was quite prepared for Henny's, Bella's, and the three St. Legers' warm approval of any fun which they could secure, but she did think that Lotty would have raised her voice in protest. Betty had a kind of pained memory of Miss St. Leger's face as she looked appealingly at the girls and asked them to be faithful.

"I don't appeal to your affection, but *I* do to your honor," she had said. Betty knew perfectly well that if Miss St. Leger were at home, they would not be taken late at night to a circus, for that good lady was most particular on all these points, and seldom or never took her girls to treats in town. If she did, she would certainly

not take them in the evening. Still, mademoiselle was now in command. What was to be done?

Betty looked round the room. She knew it was wrong: how was she to deliver her protest? She was not particularly brave, and she dreaded ridicule; still, Miss St. Leger had sent for her. Miss St. Leger had said, "Betty, I trust you fully," and then she had spoken about that dreadful weekly letter.

"I'll tell them about that letter now," she said to herself. "I know they'll hate me, but I can't help it."

Henny was rushing round and round the room in the arms of the impetuous Bella Steel. Bella was whistling a waltz, and they were spinning round so fast, and Henny was laughing so heartily, that neither of them heard Betty when she began to speak. Elsie suddenly came up to them, however, and gave Bella a rough pull to make her stop.

"You had better listen to this piece of folly," she said. "Betty Falkoner is talking. I think she must have gone out of her mind."

"No, I haven't," said Betty, whose face was as white as a sheet, "but I think it's only honest to tell you all something."

"Oh, dear me! let us listen to the virtuous one," exclaimed Henny, putting on her most

mocking smile. "Now then, Eliza, Elizabeth, Betty, and Bess, speak up."

Lotty, who had been devouring the "Fortunes of Nigel," standing by the window, seemed to wake at these words with a start. She came up to Betty and looked at her.

"Why are you so white, Bettina?" she said in her hearty voice. "Speak up!"

"It's only this," said Betty. "I expect you'll all hate me for it, and I really didn't wish a bit to do it; but when she asked me, I could not quite help myself, and I—I promised. I had no choice."

"When who asked you?" said Henrietta. "I wish to goodness, Eliza, you wouldn't talk in that wriggling sort of way. I can assure you we are none of us in the mood to listen to a sermon. Oh, the horses, the darling horses, and the joys of Mlle. Henri's rule! Now then, Bess, don't choke; out with it!"

"I wish you wouldn't make it so difficult for me," said Betty. "It's just this: Miss St. Leger says I'm to write to her once a week."

"Dear, dear me, how interesting!" exclaimed Elsie.

"You'll be sure to send my love, dear," exclaimed Henny.

"Tell her, darling, that I miss her sorely, but I still manage to eat enough to support life," cried Bella.

"Why do you tease her?" exclaimed Lotty. "Go on, Betty; I see by your eyes that you have something else to say."

"I don't like to write," continued Betty, "but I—she wished me to. She said she trusted me, and that I was to tell anything that came into my head. I mean," continued Betty, "that I think she'd expect me to tell her about our going to the circus to-night."

"Oh, you mean little spy!" exclaimed Henny. "But do tell her, if you like. I, for one, don't care."

"No, I'm not a spy!" said Betty, who was roused by this taunt to a sudden show of spirit. "If I were a spy, I would write without telling you; but I now tell you all at once that I've got to write the letter, that Miss St. Leger trusts me, and that I'm going to be honest. I'm not a spy, for I have told you all. You know now; I've told you at once."

Betty's words had a curious effect on the girls. Henny and Bella stopped dancing, and Elsie was seen to dart a quick, rather nervous glance, first at her sisters, and then at Henny and Bella.

Lotty was the first to speak.

"I don't quite understand you, Betty," she said. "We are not going to the circus without leave; mademoiselle is taking us. Perhaps Miss St. Leger would not take us, but as made-

moiselle has been put in control, I cannot see that we are doing wrong in going with her. For my part," continued Lotty, "I shall enjoy it; I love books, but I also love horses."

She turned as she spoke, and going back to the window, took up her novel.

When Lotty did this, it seemed to Betty as if her last prop had failed her. Was it possible that Lotty saw no harm in this direct infringement of Miss St. Leger's rules? Henrietta and Elsie began to address Betty now in angry, sneering voices, but she did not hear their words. Perhaps she was too particular, perhaps she was silly, perhaps this was not what Miss St. Leger meant by telling the girls that she appealed to their honor. She lowered her eyes, and stood white and trembling. At this moment mademoiselle entered the room with a brisk step.

"I have come for the money," she said, darting a quick glance at the girls—"a shilling apiece, my little demoiselles, will cover all expenses."

Betty could scarcely believe her own senses when she absolutely felt herself putting her hand into her pocket, opening her purse, and taking out a shilling. She dropped it into mademoiselle's extended palm, and turned on her heel as she did so.

"What a dear, polite, Parisian-mannered little eavesdropper!" whispered Rose St. Leger, as she walked by her. "It's so nice of you, Betty, to

talk in that tone to us all, and then to take your own fill of pleasure."

Betty stopped when these words were said to her. She turned and faced her tormentor; her pretty greeny-brown eyes looked full at Rose.

"Yes," she said, in a steady voice, "I'm in it with the rest of you—with Lotty and the rest of you. I think I'd rather be in it with Lotty than out of it all by myself. But that won't prevent my writing; I promised, and I must keep my word."

"Herr Schmidt, young ladies!" said Alice's voice at the door.

The fat, good-natured German professor entered the room, and all the girls flew to their desks to begin work.

It seemed to Herr Schmidt that he had never had such orderly, attentive pupils before. There was no fidgeting, no talking in whispers, no dropping books on the floor for the express purpose of worrying him with a noise, no shuffling of feet. All was order, attention, peace. Herr Schmidt, fat as he was, had sensitive nerves; there were certain small noises which irritated him inexpressibly; the banging of a book on the floor was one, the clearing of a throat was another. The fräuleins, as he called his pupils, were all that was delightful to-day. The lessons came to an end amid quite a glow of harmony, and Herr Schmidt

bowed himself out with a radiant face. The music lessons went off with equal tranquillity, and now, at last, the work of the day was over, and pleasure, dear, darling, seductive pleasure, was to begin.

"Begone, dull care,
You and I will never agree,"

sang Henny, in her high, sweet voice, as she danced about the preparation room. "Oh, isn't it delicious? No headaches to-night, no ink-stained fingers, no buzz, buzz, buzz of that intolerable, disagreeable learning. Oh, isn't it heavenly to be under the control of dear mademoiselle!"

"Yes, she's quite a dear," said Elsie, coming up to Henrietta at this juncture. "But, I say, Henny," she continued, dropping her voice to a whisper, and glancing behind her, "we must do something to prevent that horrid little Betty telling all about our fun to Agatha. You know mademoiselle said to-day that this was only the beginning of good times; we're going to have more treats than one. She says she has been stifled with all our formalities, and she fairly pines for a bit of pleasure; and now that her cousin is in Dorchester, and he knows the master of the hippodrome, she is sure to get no end of tickets given to her. For my part, I think it's awfully good-natured of her to treat us all, and I

don't see why a stupid, prudish, little newcomer like Betty Falkoner should interfere with us."

"It's unbearable!" said Henrietta. "I never took to her, never! From the first moment I saw her I thought she was sly and underhand, and the facts of to-day have abundantly proved that I am right. Did you notice the fuss she made this morning, telling Agatha that she'd be sure to be good? I don't think I ever heard of a more forward, self-assertive speech. What right had she to take the lead? Why, she's one of the youngest of us all, and only a month in the school. Of course Agatha was taken with her, and sent for her to give her orders to spy on us. That's what that letter means; but I'll put a stop to it; see if I don't!"

"Well, I hope you will," said Elsie, "for we won't have a bit of fun if this kind of thing goes on. It was very queer indeed, of Aunt Agatha to send for Betty and ask her to write to her, when Rose and Marian and I are in the house."

"Oh, well, my dear, you see she trusts Betty," said Henrietta, with a sly smile. "But never mind, Elsie, we'll be too much for the fair innocent: see if we're not!"

"Why, she's worse even than Lotty!" said Elsie. "I'm sure Lotty is good enough to satisfy anybody, but she does not see any harm in our having a bit of fun; she has sufficient sense to

know that, if anyone is to blame, it's our dear precious mademoiselle."

The gong sounded at this moment for tea, and the girls all tripped into the dining room.

They talked a good deal during the meal about their pleasure trip, and their enjoyment was even more heightened when mademoiselle told them that she wished them all to go nicely dressed.

"For," she said, "we are sure to be in the front row, and we may even have to take off our hats and bonnets. It's a very select, special kind of circus, and my cousin, M. André, will, I am sure, get us the very best seats in the house."

"How delicious!" said Rose. "I do love dressing up smart. I'll wear my blue velveteen frock, with a pink artificial rose fastened in front."

"Ah, that will be lovely!" said mademoiselle. "I do adore color; you English are so *triste*—all grays, and drabs, and browns. Put on your blue dress, my little Rose, and the artificial rose at your neck will be a symbol of the flower after which you are called."

Rose had a heavy, fat, dumpling face, with not a trace of the bloom of her delicate namesake. The rest of the girls tittered, but there was little time to make any more remarks. Immediately after tea they had all to rush upstairs and make themselves smart. Then a big old landau, which was shut up for the occasion, arrived at the door.

and they all scrambled in somehow; Lotty, however, choosing in preference to go on the box beside the driver. Mademoiselle looked wonderfully smart when she came down dressed for the occasion. She had on a very tight-fitting black silk dress; she wore gold earrings, a heavy gold necklace, and gold bangles; her hay-colored hair was coiled up high on her head, and her elaborate fringe very much curled and frizzed.

"Oh, mademoiselle, how lovely you look!" said Henrietta, as she stepped into the fly.

"Sit near me, mademoiselle, darling," said Elsie; "I don't mind how much you crush me. Oh, and you have that delicious perfume on your handkerchief? [sniff, sniff] how I do enjoy it!"

Mademoiselle, who had been talking in a very eager way to Alice, the parlor-maid, now smiled graciously at the children, and seating herself in the fly, managed to crush them all in the most uncomfortable manner. Her black silk dress was well spread out over their laps, and the crimson opera cloak, which she carried on her arm, added further to the general sense of suffocation.

Betty, who sat with her back to the horse, felt both sick and faint. She alone of the party had made no attempt at evening decoration, and her heavy crape dress added to her discomfort. She longed to be out on the box seat with Lotty, but

felt herself in such disgrace that she did not like to suggest such a luxury.

Lotty's voice was heard at intervals reciting the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," in a passionate voice, for the benefit, perhaps, of the coachman, who was, however, far too deaf to hear her.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER THE FUN WAS OVER.

THE party arrived in good time at the hippodrome, and when the carriage drew up at the entrance, mademoiselle's cousin, M. André, came up to bid them welcome. He was a dapper-looking, very slender young man, with long sloping shoulders and hay-colored hair, like his cousin; he wore a sweeping mustache, and had a remarkably polite manner. His broken English, his graceful bows, and wave of the hand, completely fascinated both Henrietta and Elsie; they thought they had never seen anyone so stylish before, and they looked with renewed admiration at the fortunate mademoiselle, who possessed so fascinating a relation.

M. André conducted the whole party into what to Betty's eyes looked like an enormous barn. They were taken, as mademoiselle had prophesied, to chairs in the very front row, and, a few moments after their arrival, the performance began to a crowded house. A small boy rode rapidly past on a cream-colored pony; faster and faster he flew, amid shouts of applause, chang-

ing his position constantly, as the pony flew by. Finally he stood erect on the little animal, poised on one slender toe, balancing himself skillfully with his arms in the air. Lotty held her breath with fascination; the other girls clapped their hands in their excitement, while as to mademoiselle, she both laughed and cried in her hysterical French manner.

"Ah, it is ravishing!" she exclaimed, when the boy, with his cream-colored pony, was led out of the arena. "That little lad, how delicate and ethereal he is, how graceful! it makes the heart beat to watch him. Ah, mesdemoiselles, what a delicious change from the buzz, buzz of lessons, eh?"

The girls all replied in high good humor. Even Betty forgot her uncomfortable feelings in the intense interest of the moment.

Other performers came on the scene, and the two hours passed, as it seemed, in a twinkling.

M. André had not remained with his cousin during the entertainment; indeed both Henny and Elsie very shrewdly suspected that he could not do so, for the simple fact that he was part of it himself. They were quite certain that those were his shoulders on the person of the smart groom, who spoke so rudely to the clown; but as mademoiselle said nothing on the subject, they also were silent. Each girl was supplied with a

programme, and M. André's name certainly did not appear on it.

Now, however, that the treat, the dear, delightful treat, was over, he appeared once more on the scene.

To Lotty's astonishment, he came up and spoke to her.

"Would the ladies honor him," he said, "by coming to partake of a little light, very light refreshment at a restaurant of the highest respectability close by? He had engaged a private room for the occasion, and he would be ravished simply ravished, if they would honor him." As he spoke, he spread out his arm in the shape of a bow, for Lotty to accept.

She opened her big eyes wide, turned to mademoiselle, and said abruptly:

"Are we to go? The circus was very jolly, but I'm dead with sleep."

"Oh, *chérie*," exclaimed mademoiselle, "you must pardon my poor cousin. He has prepared just a few sandwiches, and a little lemonade; the restaurant touches these doors, and to partake of the hospitable feast will not occupy five minutes."

"Yes, of course we'll come," said Henrietta; "it will be the greatest fun in the world. If you're dead with sleep, Lotty, I'm consumed with thirst; a drink of lemonade will be too lovely."

Henrietta wished that M. André would offer her his arm. He looked quite exquisite in his correct evening dress, with a huge white camellia in his buttonhole. He stuck, however, to Lotty, and she presently found herself floundering off by his side.

The private room in the restaurant could be entered by a covered way, and here the girls found a nice little supper of lobster, cold chicken sandwiches, jellies, and lemonade, spread for their benefit. They all sat round the table and helped themselves, M. André not paying the least attention to them, but devoting himself entirely to his cousin, mademoiselle. Elsie, who watched them under her long eyelashes, felt quite certain that they divided a bottle of pink champagne between them; but the other girls, when questioned on the subject, said that they were not sure.

The five minutes lengthened into half an hour, and it was a quarter to eleven o'clock before the little party found themselves once more in the landau, and driving back to Melville Hall.

They were all tired and sleepy now, and even Lotty, who still maintained her preference for the box seat, had some difficulty in keeping herself from falling off, and no longer entertained the night air with recitations from the poets.

To the surprise of everyone, the landau, instead

of driving up the avenue, stopped at the gates of the lodge.

Here mademoiselle asked the whole party to align; she paid the driver, who immediately went away.

"I thought, my dears," she said, turning to her charges, "that there was no use in waking people up, by this so late return from our pleasurable party; I have arranged, therefore, that Alice lets us in by the side door, and that we go upstairs treading soft. *Comprennez-vous, mes enfants?* Madame's cousin, Miss Marshall, will have arrived. I have said to Alice: 'Say that the young ladies have retired for the night.' That was true, for you had retired from Melville Hall, at least."

She paused. Elsie gave a hollow little laugh of pretended satisfaction; all the other girls were silent.

"Quick, *mes enfants!*" continued the governess, "let us hasten; it is all right. We have had an enjoyable time, and now we go to bed, and the prudish Miss Marshall, she know nothing."

The girls were all walking up the avenue as mademoiselle made this remark. Now, to the astonishment of the others, Lotty turned.

"I am going in by the front door," she said; "the rest of you can do as you please. You can slink in as mademoiselle suggests, or go openly·

it does not matter at all to me. I shall ring the hall-door bell. Who is coming with me?"

"I am," said Betty, in a trembling voice. She rushed up to Lotty, and slipped her hand through her arm.

"That's right, Bettina," exclaimed Lotty, giving the small hand a squeeze. The whole party had stood still when Lotty began to speak.

She had moved slightly away from her companions, and was now facing mademoiselle. The night was clear and moonlit, and the features of the governess looked particularly pale.

"Dear Lotty," she began, "you will not act thus silly. I did not tell one lie; it was correct; we had retired."

"Nonsense!" said Lotty. "Don't cling so tight to me, Betty; I must speak. Mademoiselle, I don't want to be rude to you, but you are talking the greatest humbug I ever listened to, and I for one will have neither part nor lot in it. You know, and all the girls know, that I'm not prudish, and that I like a bit of fun as well as anybody, but to slink in by the back door is what no one will ever make me do. Why, I should think that I had done something wicked! I should not have a wink of sleep all night; I could not look Miss Marshall in the face in the morning; and what's more, I could not write a comfortable letter to mother on Sunday. There, I

won't waste time talking any longer. Come on, Betty; the rest of you can do as you please."

"But oh, I beg, I implore," began mademoiselle; "just stop one moment, Charlotte, *chérie*. Betty, pause, I entreat of you. This will ruin me—it will, truly. Mlle. Marshall will not understand. I meant no harm, only a little bit of pleasure, and to give you all pleasure. Oh, I beseech of you, Mlle. Lotty, I most earnestly beseech of you!"

"If you meant no wrong," said Lotty, "we can all go in by the front door. I did not see any harm in going with you; if I did, you may be quite sure I wouldn't have gone. Miss St. Leger left you in charge of the school, and you wanted to give us a bit of fun, and it seemed all right; but now I don't think you can have done right, mademoiselle, or you wouldn't be so awfully afraid, and you wouldn't wish to conceal it. I'm not going to conceal it; so don't you think it. Come on, Betty! And I may as well add," continued Lotty, darting a quick glance at the rest of the girls, "that I think you ought all to come with me."

There was an instant's pause. Mademoiselle's face looked whiter than ever.

"Come," she said suddenly; "I have no doubt Mlle. Lotty is right. It is the English way; in England we do as the English. We will go in.

making very loud noise, and there will be no concealment. Come on, young ladies."

Not a word was said by anyone. Mademoiselle walked first very quickly, with her shoulders hitched up high, and a determined look about her face. The girls followed her. They entered the house by the ordinary door, and a moment or two later were in their rooms getting into bed.

"Don't talk to me about it, Betty," Lotty said, as the two began to undress. "You were right, and I was wrong; we ought never to have gone —never. I can't think why I was so blind. Now do let us sleep over it, for I'm completely worn out. I'll talk to you in the morning while we're dressing."

"I only just want to say one thing," said Betty. "It's so comfortable to have you on my side, Lotty; now I'm not afraid of anything."

"Never you fear," said Lotty, going up and kissing her. "We'll all be on your side after this, no doubt on that point."

Betty knelt down to say her prayers. Tired as she was, tears of thankfulness came into her eyes. The day had been full of pain to her, but on the whole she had acted with courage, and now Lotty was on her side. Nothing mattered if this were so. She lay down and soon fell asleep. In her sleep she dreamed of her mother: it was a happy and sweet dream, and when the little girl awoke.

she was more resolved than ever to do nothing in her school life that would have caused her mother pain.

"Lotty has got her mother to work for and think of," thought Betty to herself, "but my mother is not here; still, I do feel nearer to her—much, much nearer when I try to do right. I will do right, mammy, darling, for your sake. I will not do what I think wrong, because it would make you wretched; and now I am not frightened about anything, because Lotty is so fine and brave and clever. I don't even fear mademoiselle, although I hate her; yes, I do hate her, but I don't even fear her while Lotty is with me."

During the few minutes passed in dressing, Betty waited eagerly for Lotty to speak. To her surprise she saw that Lotty meant to get through her rapid toilet without uttering a word.

"O Lotty! you said you'd talk it over," she exclaimed as the elder girl was preparing to leave the room.

Lotty turned and looked full at her.

"I've changed my mind," she said.

"Then, then——" said Betty.

"Then, then——" repeated Lotty, "most timid Bettina, timid and yet brave—for you're a perfect miracle of bravery in your own way—all I can say is, leave matters to me. Now I must

run down to take one squint at my preparation before prayers."

At prayers Miss Marshall, who was to take charge of the domestic arrangements in Miss St. Leger's absence, appeared. She was a rolly-poly dumpling little woman, with small, good-natured eyes, and a somewhat wide mouth; her face was freckled, and her hair sandy. She looked the soul of kindly good humor.

"How are you all, my dears?" she said, in her hearty voice. "I was sorry to arrive here so late last night as not to be able to see you, but Agatha's telegram was delayed on the road, and I missed the train I should have come by. Alice told me you had all gone to bed. 'Quite right, too,' I said. I approve of early hours. Now, dears, come and sit round the fire; the morning is bitterly cold. Ah, and here you are, Mad'moiselle Hengri." (Miss Marshall's French was not her strong point.) "I have heard of you; I envy you your knowledge of foreign tongues. My dear soul, how pinched and blue you look. Here's a cozy chair close to the fire. Now then, I will read a portion of Scripture."

The servants filed into the hall, Miss Marshall mounted to the desk where Miss St. Leger always stood to read prayers: she was shorter even than Miss St. Leger, and her head could not be seen above the high desk. She read in a low, rapid

voice. A collect followed the Scripture reading, and then the little party trooped into the breakfast room. They were all seated, and Miss Marshall was pouring out coffee, when Lotty, springing to her feet, spoke.

"I want to tell you something, Miss Marshall," she said. "Alice did not speak the truth when she said we were in bed last night. When you arrived here, we were none of us in bed; we were all away in Dorchester at the hippodrome. Mlle. Henri kindly took us, and we enjoyed ourselves very much. We got home a little after eleven; I thought you ought to know. I have nothing more to say," continued Lotty, dropping into her chair. "Pass me the toast, please, Elsie."

CHAPTER XII.

BY THE CROSSROADS.

THERE was a dead silence after Lotty had made her confession; the other six girls were afraid even to look at each other. Mademoiselle's rather muddy complexioned face took on a green shade; her brown eyes emitted a flash of stealthy fire. She seized the loaf and began to cut a slice of bread with nervous energy. Miss Marshall set down the large coffee pot which she was holding; she looked first at Lotty, then at the other girls, then at mademoiselle.

"It seemed unnecessary to go to the trouble and sin of telling me an untruth," she remarked. "I am not in charge of any of you young ladies; you are under Mlle. Henri's care; she must account for you to Miss St. Leger. I am only here to see that the house is in order and that your meals are comfortable."

When Miss Marshall came to the end of this speech, she once more resumed her occupation of pouring out cups of coffee.

There was another uncomfortable pause; then

Elsie said something of an ordinary nature in a timid voice, Henny remarked on the weather; Miss Marshall inquired after Jasper's health, and by degrees a desultory and feeble conversation was resumed. Mademoiselle, however, did not speak a single word, and Lotty, who, having delivered her soul, almost forgot the circumstance, kept repeating the lines of a long recitation in a low voice to herself between her snatches of food. As they were all going to the schoolroom, and Betty was hoping for a word with Lotty, mademoiselle came up behind the two girls.

"Thank you," she said, darting a quick glance at Lotty, and then looking at Betty—"thank you both sincerely. I am one who never, never forgets the little benefits, of those who are kind to me."

She swept on.

"Isn't she horrid!" said Betty. "O Lotty, do you think I ought to tell Miss St. Leger when I write to her next week?"

"Tell her in a letter!" exclaimed Lotty. "No, I don't think I would; it would only worry her, and be of no use. Wait until she comes home; then you can do as you please."

"But she trusted me," said Betty, puckering her brows.

Lotty looked annoyed.

"Well, do as you please, Bettina," she said

"I'm afraid I can't counsel you. I did what I thought right last night and what I considered my duty this morning, and now I am not going to waste any more thoughts on the hateful thing. I have to get my essay on Julius Cæsar written by to-night; and I want to read the whole of Shakspere's play over again so as to saturate my mind with the subject. I really have no time to waste upon mademoiselle and her little vagaries."

Lotty hurried off to the schoolroom, and Betty knew that it would be useless to expect any more help from her in her present dilemma.

The morning lessons were all got through with exemplary attention, and the girls ran up at the usual hour to prepare for their walk. As a rule, Betty was fortunate in securing Lotty's company for her walk, but on this occasion Lotty, who had a slight cold, did not go out, and she soon perceived, rather painfully, that none of the other girls wished for her company. They did not walk in their usual stately fashion, two and two, along the roads, but with mademoiselle in their midst, formed a little eager knot, all talking, gesticulating, and laughing, and poor Betty found herself practically sent to Coventry.

She felt a good deal annoyed for a minute or two; then she resolved to make the best of circumstances, and walking along by the hedgerows

amused herself watching the signs of spring, which were every day growing plainer and plainer. There was a pretty old-fashioned village about a mile away from Melville Hall. To go to this village was the girls' favorite ambition; they made every possible excuse to visit it, although they all knew that Miss St. Leger preferred that their walks should be taken into the country, On this occasion, accompanied by mademoiselle, they started off as usual in the direction of Furley, the name of the pretty little village. Halfway there, however, they stopped and waited, to Betty's surprise, for her to come up and join them.

"What are you lingering behind for?" said mademoiselle in her sharpest French; "you know it is against the rules. Walk with Marian, if you please. Now, young ladies, I have to go for a message into Furley, and you will all have the goodness to keep on this highroad until I return. I will meet you without fail in half an hour. Now don't loiter. Walk down that pretty road, and then turn back so as to meet me by this cross-road in half an hour. Elsie, you have a watch, so you can mark the time."

The girls all promised to obey, and Betty found herself walking with Marian.

Henny, Bella, Elsie, and Rose walked four abreast in front. They were talking and giggling

eagerly, and Marian was evidently on tenter-hooks to know what they were saying.

"You can go on and join them," said Betty; "I don't a bit mind walking alone."

"Thank you very much," said Marian, "for giving me permission; but I'm afraid I can't help myself. Mademoiselle says that you're a dangerous sort, and must not be left."

"I don't care a scrap what mademoiselle says," replied Betty, flushing angrily, and the tears coming into her eyes. "It isn't I who am dangerous."

"Oh, dear, dear! then who do you accuse?" said Marian. "What a very disagreeable sort of girl you are! You needn't imagine that I like to walk with you; I'd much, much rather be with the others. I can't see why you have fallen to my lot; I'll divide you with Rose with pleasure. Rose," continued Marian, calling out her sister's name in a loud tone, "you have got to take Betty Falkoner when we turn back: do you hear?"

"Yes; but I don't heed," said Rose. "I don't want Betty Falkoner. She wasn't given to me to look after, and I won't walk with her."

"And I won't walk with any of you," said Betty, who was now beside herself with passion. "I hate you all! I never met such horrid girls. You can go on by yourselves for aught I care.

I'll go back and wait for mademoiselle at the crossroads."

She rushed away as she spoke; the other girls looked after her for a moment, and Marian hesitated whether to pursue or not. She quickly decided, however, to leave Betty to her fate, and the little girl, blinded with passion and tears, flew along the road until she reached the place where they had parted with mademoiselle. Here she stood still, and tried, for a long time in vain, to check her bitter tears. How lonely she was and wretched; how horrid the girls were to her; how impossible it was to do right; how bad she felt!

"Mother wouldn't know me if she came back again," thought Betty. "I feel getting crosser and crosser each minute. What is the matter with all the girls? I don't want to hurt them in any way, and yet they detest me and won't speak to me, and they call me dangerous; and even Lotty is too busy with her horrid books to take any notice of me. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I am miserable. I can't stay at school if this goes on. Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?"

On the crossroads where Betty stood on that particular March day, the four winds of heaven seemed to meet. It was impossible to nourish a dignified grief when you were being blown and knocked about and searched by those penetrating breezes. Betty presently dried her eyes, and

still feeling sore inwardly, but no longer in tears, stood and waited for mademoiselle. This part of the road was very solitary, and in the middle of the day an hour or more often passed without anyone going by. Betty crept for shelter near one of the hedges, and presently, in order to screen herself better from the bitter winds, sat down in the grass and wrapped her little black cloak tightly round her.

She was sitting thus when the noise of voices attracted her attention. She looked up and saw several people gayly dressed walking down the road; there were two or three women and a couple of men. They were all talking and laughing loudly, and in their midst, to Betty's amazement, walked Mlle. Henri. M. André walked at one side of the governess, and a large, showily dressed woman at the other; two or three men and women of the same type followed behind. As they approached the crossroads, they all stood still. Betty, hidden by the long grass and thick shrubs which grew in the hedgerow, could not be seen, but she herself could both see and hear everything. She felt nearly petrified with terror: she knew she ought not to eavesdrop, and yet she was afraid to move.

"Yes," said mademoiselle's voice, "I will manage to meet you to-night for an hour or so, perhaps—not more. No, I cannot bring the girls—

not to-night, at any rate; there is in our midst a traitor—nay two traitors. I bitterly regret the fact, but there it is, and I am powerless; go now, good friends; I will meet you without fail to-night."

"Could not you give me a little money—just ten shillings?" said the stout woman who walked on mademoiselle's right side.

Mademoiselle seemed to hesitate.

"I'll try to bring it to-night," she said. "I have not it now—no, really, but I'll bring it to-night; ask me for it then. Adieu, Victoire; adieu, Louise; adieu, Ernestine. I'll meet you this evening and bring the *argent*. Oh! go, go! quick! or we are lost. If the young ladies find out, we are lost!"

The men and women shook hands with mademoiselle, and then hurrying down a side road, were lost to view; mademoiselle stood in the middle of the road, and Betty, sick with absolute terror, crept farther under the hedge.

"I dare not—I dare not let her find me," thought the child. "If she knew I had overheard, she'd half kill me. Oh, I am terrified! What shall I do?"

Fortunately for Betty, mademoiselle walked down the highroad a short way to meet her pupils. The little girl instantly took advantage of the absence to climb over the hedge into the

neighboring field. Here she was in comparative safety. In a few moments she heard the voices of her fellow-pupils. They all stopped by the crossroads, and the girls began to call her name. Betty did not dare to reply. Mademoiselle seemed disturbed, and began to ask eagerly about her.

"I have been waiting for you for two or three minutes," she said to the others. "I was quick with my messages, and waited here and looked and strained my eyes, but none of you were in sight. There was no Betty—of that I am positive. She must have gone home."

"Oh, she was in such a rage!" said Marian—"such an awful temper! She rushed up the road away from us all as if she were blind. She said she would wait at the crossroads for you. What can have become of her?"

"She did not wait, the angry little one," said mademoiselle. "In her passion she must have returned to Melville Hall. When we go back there, we will find her; and after dinner, girls, I will speak to Mlle. Betty, and punish her severe for her insubordination."

CHAPTER XIII.

FIFTEEN GUINEAS.

BETTY waited until all the voices had died away, then she got up slowly and looked around her. Her eyes were swollen with crying; the wind had blown her long, straight hair about her face; her clothes felt all awry.

"Mother would say I was tempest-tossed," thought poor Betty, with the ghost of the saddest of smiles, "and I'm sure I am, both inside and out. What is to become of me? what shall I do? I'm just about the most wretched girl in the world. Oh, I'm afraid of that wicked mademoiselle; I'm absolutely afraid of her. I dare not tell what I heard when I lay hidden in the hedge. What shall I—oh, what shall I do?"

Betty stood for some time considering. Her furious anger had subsided, but she felt fearful, and quite uncertain as to what she ought to do.

"It's so mean to eavesdrop," she said to herself. "If I tell what I overheard mademoiselle and her friends talking about, everyone will know I was eavesdropping. No, I can't tell; I won't

tell. It isn't my affair, surely. I'll just go back to Melville Hall, and say nothing whatever about it. I can't live my present life much longer: all the girls except Lotty hate me; I can't live where I am hated. I'll let them alone; they may do what they please as far as I am concerned. I won't act a spy on them, as they call it. If Lotty were to help me, and not to go off into those dreadful sort of dreams, I might be able to do something; but as it is——"

Betty shook her head sadly; she now climbed over the hedge, and began to walk in the direction of Melville Hall. She knew she should be late for dinner and would deserve punishment, but in her present state of misery nothing seemed to matter. She reached the Hall just as the dinner-gong was sounding.

"You're very late, miss," said Alice, looking at her, as Betty thought, suspiciously.

"Have they all gone into the dining room yet, Alice?" inquired the little girl.

"Yes, miss, just this minute, and mademoiselle seems dreadful put out about something; you had better be quick getting your things off, Miss Falkoner."

Betty flew upstairs; she tossed off her hat and cloak, brushed out her hair, and without once glancing at her tear-stained face, rushed downstairs. When she entered the dining room, all

eyes were turned upon her. Mademoiselle sat at one end of the table, Miss Marshall at the other. Mademoiselle's light brown eyes looked as morsels of ice; her lips were like iron. She did not speak at all. One or two of the girls gave an audible titter; Lotty's full, tender, dark gaze was fixed on Betty in apprehension. Betty seemed to feel this, without absolutely seeing it. She knew if she glanced at Lotty, and met her sympathy, all would be lost. Miss Marshall's voice, sounding kindly on her ears, was the first to greet her.

"What a late little girl!" she said. "Come, Betty—is not that your name? I have kept a seat for you near myself. Alice, fetch some soup for Miss Falkoner."

As Betty took her seat, mademoiselle looked up as if about to speak, but suddenly changing her mind, she resumed her own dinner, and turning to one of the girls, began to talk gayly in her native tongue.

The meal proceeded in silence on the part of Betty—in spasmodic efforts to talk French on that of her companions.

As soon as ever dinner was over, mademoiselle walked down the long dining room, seized Betty's hand, and drew her into the hall.

"I punish you for your insubordination," she said; "you spend the afternoon here." She

pushed Betty as she spoke into a small cloak-room, and turned the key in the lock. The whole scene took place in a moment. Mademoiselle's face had turned crimson, Betty's whiter than ever. All the girls stopped and stared; the key turned with a grating noise in the lock, and the little girl found herself alone. The voices of her fellow-pupils died away, all was absolute silence.

The cloak-room had no fireplace, but for a long time Betty was too excited with angry feelings to notice the cold. Her nature was naturally as passionate as it was deeply affectionate. All her worst passions were raised now; she fumed and raged; she felt like a little wild animal caught in a cage. For the first time hatred—black, terrible hatred—filled her heart.

Betty used to wonder long ago how anyone could hate anybody else, but she wondered no longer as she walked up and down the little cloak-room. Never even had it entered into her imagination that anyone could be so unjust, so fierce, so cruel, so malignant as mademoiselle.

"And if I told all, she would be dismissed," thought Betty. "I'm quite, quite sure she would. Miss St. Leger doesn't know her. If she knew her, really, she would not keep her for a single day in this school. She is deceitful; she is, she must be deceitful. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I ought to tell Miss St. Leger. Only then I'd have to say

that I eavesdropped; and now that she has punished me like this, it will all seem like revenge. What shall I do? what shall I do?"

Betty moaned and cried. At last, worn out with her emotions, she sank down on a hard chair, and clasping her hands, looked miserably in front of her. The cold of the bitter little room became for the first time perceptible. After all her excitement, the little girl felt chilled; she was soon shivering; her teeth chattered. She wondered how long mademoiselle intended to keep her in this icy room. She knew she would catch a very severe cold if she were not soon set at liberty.

As these thoughts came to her, the door of the room was suddenly opened, and Miss Marshall came in.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed that good lady; "I wondered why the door was locked. What are you doing in this bitter place, little Betty Falkoner?"

"I'm being punished," said Betty.

"Punished, my dear child, by whom?"

"By mademoiselle. She was angry with me for not walking with the other girls, and I got into a passion, and I was late home. I know I did wrong," continued Betty, looking with great pathos at Miss Marshall.

Now, if there was a good-natured soul in this world, it was the little dumpling-faced Miss

Marshall, who was now in charge of the commissariat department of the school. She stared full at Betty for a moment; then her eyes filled with tears, and going up to the little girl, she put her two arms round her.

"You poor, little, shivering, pale-faced thing!" she exclaimed; "why, you will catch your death in this icy room. Agatha would not permit such a thing for a moment. Listen to me, Betty, my love: I am going to interefere. You shan't stay here."

"Oh, but she'll be so angry!" exclaimed Betty. "I had better stay, please, Miss Marshall; I know I was naughty for not walking with Marian, but she did taunt me so, and I lost my temper. I think I had better stay; perhaps mademoiselle will soon let me out, and if I wrap a shawl about me, I won't feel the cold so much."

"You are not to stay," replied Miss Marshall, in a firm voice. "Agatha sent me here to prevent illness, and to keep you all in health. This sort of thing means a doctor's bill, and it can't be permitted. I will speak to mademoiselle immediately. Come with me, Betty Falkoner."

Miss Marshall took poor Betty's unwilling hand, and trotted quickly down one of the corridors with her. They found mademoiselle in a small room adjoining the schoolroom, giving Henrietta a special lesson in French. Or at least

that seemed to be their employment, although Henrietta's excited face might have led a more sharp-witted person than Miss Marshall to suspect that they were employing their time in conversation of a particularly interesting character, not over lessons.

Mademoiselle raised her brows in astonishment and anger when she saw Betty.

"What new act of insubordination is this?" she exclaimed. "I locked that bad, bad, *bad* child up; and she ought not to come to me without my permission. Oh, she shall suffer for this!"

"Pardon me," said Miss Marshall in a firm tone. "I found Betty in a room without a fire, and in a terrible state of cold and chill. It is my place to interfere where the health of the children is concerned. If this little girl is naughty, you must give her some other punishment; I forbid her to remain in the cloak-room another moment."

"What fuss is this?" said mademoiselle. "Her angry passions would have kept that bad child warm; but as you please, Miss Marshall. I submit. Betty Falkoner, hand me that French book."

Betty did so. Mademoiselle gave her a page of Racine to learn by heart and told her that she might sit in the schoolroom until her task was finished.

Miss Marshall took Betty into the well-warmed

schoolroom; she made her sit near the fire, and then, taking her two icy little hands in her own, she looked into her face.

"Somehow, I can't believe that you have really been very naughty," she said; "anyhow, I know you will do your best now."

"I will, and thank you so very much," said Betty, giving the kind-hearted little woman a grateful smile.

Miss Marshall hurried out of the room, and Betty devoted herself to her irksome task. After a couple of hours' hard work, she learned the page of poetry. Mademoiselle heard her repeat it, hardly listening at all, and correcting none of her mistakes. Her punishment was then supposed to be over.

"Now, Betty, come and sit with me," said Lotty. "I want you to be awfully good-natured; I have something most exciting to tell you."

Betty felt quite cheered by the friendly and affectionate tone.

"O Lotty!" she exclaimed, with a great sigh of relief, "I have had such a miserable, miserable day."

"Yes, but it is all over now, Bettina," said Lotty. "I heard the girls talking, and I think you really were something of a little goose."

"Yes, but please let me explain."

"I will another time, but not now. Where is

the good of talking over grievances? Let's forget them. All you can do, when things go wrong, is to vow to act better on the next occasion. I know some of those girls are enough to try the patience of a saint. Still, for all that, you have lived through it, Betty; so now forget it."

With an effort Betty suppressed a sigh. She longed beyond anything to tell her troubles and perplexities to Lotty, but Lotty would not listen. She determined, therefore, to let the thoughts which perplexed her sink out of sight for the present, and to enjoy the satisfaction of sitting alone with Lotty in the inner schoolroom. Tea was long over, preparation was past, and there was a precious half-hour before supper which the two girls might spend as they liked best.

"Now then," said Lotty, "I'm going to confide in you: it's a great secret."

"As great as the one you hug?" said Betty.

"Yes, it's connected with that. Now, let me begin. You must know, Betty, that Miss St. Leger has a friend, a very rich lady, a Mrs. Rivers, who now and then, when the whim takes her, offers a prize to the school. She does not offer it every year. Sometimes she forgets all about it; sometimes she offers it for two or three years in succession. Miss Marshall knows Mrs. Rivers very well; in fact she spends quite half her time with her in London, and it was from her house

she came in such a hurry when poor Agatha had to go away to nurse her sick cousin. Now, Betty, can you guess what Miss Marshall told me to-day?"

"No," said Betty: "how can I possibly guess? It must be something good, for you look so fearfully excited, Lotty."

"I should think I am. I could scarcely think of anything else since Miss Marshall told me immediately after dinner."

"Well, do let me know what makes you so happy."

"It's this: Mrs. Rivers, the old duck, said to Miss Marshall about a week ago: 'I intend to offer a prize to those girls of Agatha's next midsummer. I shall go to Melville Hall and give it to the successful girl myself. I shall make it worth the poor things' while to struggle for it. The prize shall be given in money, fifteen guineas in gold and silver in a purse with my initials on it.' Betty, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Lotty, breaking off abruptly. "Fifteen guineas! Oh, dear! oh, dear! is not it enough to madden one with joy?"

"But how is the prize to be won?" asked Betty. "It sounds most exciting; but how is the girl to win the fifteen guineas?"

"Oh, that can't be settled until Agatha comes home. Agatha must decide on the subject, and

all that sort of thing. I'm determined to win it, Betty."

"Why, of course you will, Lotty," said Betty, stroking her friend's hand with her own thin little fingers; "there isn't another girl in the house can touch you. I'm sure none of the rest of us care to wade in knowledge as you do."

"Oh, the prize will have to relate to all sorts of matters," said Lotty. "It isn't only learning in one particular branch; it's a sort of all-roundness. You must be good at learning all round, and you must be exemplary in your conduct, and you must be the soul of neatness and propriety, and finally, Mrs. Rivers herself must approve of you, and she's awfully fastidious. The last time the prize was given—it was some years back, before I came here, and then it was only eight pounds—Mrs. Rivers came down, and there was a great festival, and no end of things were done. There wasn't such a breaking-up as there was that year within anybody's memory, and there was a girl at the school—Florence Carlton was her name—she made certain that she'd get the prize. She was ever so clever, and she worked like a brick. She could speak French almost like a native, and her music was so classical and correct, no one could hold a candle to her; at least so everybody thought. But there was a little pale girl called Amy Ross, who, just before the decision was made,

went up to the piano, and the music mistress played an accompaniment, and the little girl sang a Scotch song that Mrs. Rivers used to know, and she did it so well that everyone felt sniffy and handkerchiefy; and Mrs. Rivers gave a sob, and then she gave a snort, and she said Amy Ross should have the prize. There was a scene, I can tell you. It makes one very nervous to have to work for a sort of old lady like that, for of course Amy didn't really deserve the prize. Florence ought to have had it."

"Well, you'll get it now," said Betty. "You're safe, you're certain to get it."

"I'm going to try for it," said Lotty, lying back in her chair, and shading her brilliant eyes with one of her long hands. "If I do get it, mother shall go to the seaside for the holidays. Oh, how I revel in the thought!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MONEY IN THE SEALSKIN PURSE.

THE next two or three days passed with outward quietness, but with a sort of suppressed excitement underneath, which seemed to pervade everything and to unsettle everyone. There was no rush now in the house—no special desire to hasten, to race, to fly through work; but this element of excitement kept the girls whispering in knots and looking mysterious—kept them from giving their minds to their lessons in lesson hours, and their minds to their play in play hours. Poor Jasper was neglected during these queer electric sort of days. Henny was his groom during the week in question, and Henny seemed a little more off her head even than the other girls. She had many faults, but she was devoted to Jasper, who liked her the best of all his little mistresses; but during this week she was apt to leave him without his hay or his oats, and then suddenly to remember the poor starving donkey with a rush of penitence.

"Oh, will someone be good enough to go and

feed that duck of a donkey?" she would exclaim. "I can't; I'm busy, I haven't a moment, I'm working up some special French with mademoiselle. Betty, I see humanity in your face; do rush off to the stable and give Jasper his oats." On another occasion Marian would be sent to do Henny's work; at other times it would be forgotten altogether, and Jasper would have good cause to sulk, because he was seriously hungry.

Betty was only too anxious to oblige the other girls during these restless days. From the moment when she had heard mademoiselle talking to her companions, a change seemed to have come over her. A new, reckless sort of look had come into her face. It seemed to her that it did not pay to be good at school—that no one wanted honorable feelings and high ideals there, and that the child who was daring enough not to swim with the current, would run a fair chance of being drowned in ridicule in consequence.

The day came when Betty, according to promise, was to write to Miss St. Leger. Henny was the one to remind her of her task.

"I suppose you will write your spying letter now, Betty," she said. "I heard Miss Marshall say that she was sending off a packet to Miss St. Leger this afternoon, and she said that if any of us had letters we had better put them in; so I suppose your volume will be dispatched. I don't

think any of the rest of us want to say a word; we leave our descriptions to you, Betty—eh, Elsie? We put ourselves in Betty's hands, don't we?"

"In what way?" asked Elsie, coming forward.

"Oh, the honorable Miss Falkoner is going to write to your Aunt Agatha. It's jolly, isn't it? Won't she make capital of the hippodrome evening?"

Betty raised her eyes and looked full at her tormentors; her whole sensitive little face was quivering.

"I wish you wouldn't be so cruel to me," she exclaimed. "I'm not what you think of me; I—I wouldn't."

"Wouldn't what?" said Henny, suddenly going down on her knees and speaking in her sweetest voice. "Wouldn't what, pretty little Bettina?"

Betty hesitated. Elsie also came close; there was an eager look in her eyes.

Had Lotty been present, Betty wouldn't have given way, but now the sudden change in the two girls, added to her own sense of desertion, was more than she could stand.

"I'm not a mischief-maker," she exclaimed suddenly.

"Bravo, Betty!" exclaimed Henrietta.

"Now she's turning out to have quite the right stuff in her, dear little thing," remarked Elsie;

"and isn't she growing pretty, Hetty? Oh, yes, you really are, Betty: there's something so *mignonne* about you. Mademoiselle always says so. She says you'd be charming and adorable if you weren't so despicable and mean."

"But she's repenting, the fair Bettina is!" exclaimed Henny; "and we'll tell mademoiselle, and all will be well. Run and write your letter, *chérie*."

Betty ran away; her heart felt like lead, and yet she tried to pretend that she was much happier. After being abused for nearly a week, it was very soothing to be petted and flattered and made a fuss over. She wondered if she really were a pretty girl; she determined to give a good look at herself in the glass when she next went to her bedroom. She wondered if she were *mignonne*, and charming, and adorable. What was it to be *mignonne?* Betty supposed it to be something very choice—she did not quite know. It was a favorite phrase of mademoiselle's; she spoke of those she admired as *mignonne* and *chic*. Betty wondered if, by and by, she would also become *chic*.

She reached Miss St. Leger's little room, and sitting down at her davenport, prepared to write her letter; she felt in a kind of whirl. She was quite certain, from several signs and tokens, that things were not going right in the school. Foot-

steps would creep past her door late at night. Mademoiselle, and Henny, and Elsie wore looks of constant mystery; they were always whispering together, and starting back with a sort of scared expression, when she (Betty) or Lotty approached. In their walks they kept together. Betty was quite certain that they also, as well as poor Lotty, hugged a secret, which was, however, partially shared by Marian, Rose, and Bella Steel. Lotty, of course, noticed nothing; her head and heart alike were full of the coming prize. When would more news come with regard to it? That was her question of questions at present.

Betty wrote her letter. It was cold and stiff. At this time of her life it was impossible for her to write in any other way, but now, with the secret feeling that she was not telling all the truth —that she had been trusted, trusted fully, and she was betraying her trust—the letter was colder, and stiffer, and altogether shabbier in its production than ever. Betty was quite certain that several of the words were spelled wrong. Try as she would, the lines would not come straight; and be as careful as ever she could be, the ink would run up her fingers and blot the page.

At last the letter came to an end, Betty put her signature, and then, with a sigh, turned away.

"It's done," she said to herself. "It's a lying sort of a letter, but it's done I'm ashamed of

myself, I hate myself, but I can't write it any different. It must go. She had no right to ask me to write those dreadful, dreadful letters!"

Miss Marshall came bustling into the room.

"Have you written a letter to Miss St. Leger?" she exclaimed. "She said you would write to her once a week. She seemed to place great dependence on your letter, and she wrote to me especially about it. I am just about to pack up all the letters that have come during the past week, and yours had better go with the rest."

"It's written—it's there," said Betty, pointing to the directed envelope which lay on the davenport.

"Well, give it to me, child, and I'll put it up with the others. What a cold day it is for the end of March!"

As Miss Marshall spoke, she took Betty's epistle between her finger and thumb.

"Why, it isn't a very thick letter," she said. "You can't have told her very much."

"I hadn't much to say," replied Betty, in a low voice.

"Well, well, she seemed to set store by this letter, poor thing! I hope for my part, she'll soon be back and able to look after matters for herself."

"I may go now, may I not?" said Betty. Miss

Marshall, thus interruped in the midst of her owr speech, looked up abruptly.

"Yes, you may go," she said, in a short voice "You are very pale. Are you well?"

"Yes, Miss Marshall, I'm quite well."

"Run away, then, child! It's a worry to see you standing there doing nothing."

Betty went off. She joined her companions in the schoolroom. The day was a wretched one, and showers of sleet were falling at intervals. The girls were all clustered round the fire. Lotty was not in the room. Betty was about to take up a book and seat herself in the most distant corner, when Henny's voice called out to her.

"Come right up to the fire," she exclaimed; "how perishing cold it is! Make room for Betty to sit between you, Marian and Elsie; now then, we're all cozy. You wrote the letter, did you, Betty?"

Betty lowered her eyes. "Yes," she said.

"And you're not a mischief-maker?"

"No; oh, no! I'm not a mischief-maker. I'm a horrid, horrid mean girl!"

"Not a bit of you," said Elsie; "you're a dear little brick, that's what you are. Kiss her, Marian; kiss her, Bella; let's kiss her all round. I say, and let's be friends with Bettina."

The girls immediately did so.

"Three cheers for Bettina," exclaimed Henny; "three cheers for good little Betty!"

Then they all clapped their hands and feet, and mademoiselle came into the room in the midst of the noise, and she, too, kissed Betty, and called her *chérie* and *mignonne.*

This sudden change of treatment was intoxicating, but at intervals Betty thought of herself as one of the worst girls in the world. From being disgraced, and hooted, and sent to Coventry, she was now the pet of the school. Lotty, however, took little or no notice of her, and Betty hungered more for one kind word from Lotty than for all the honeyed sentences which the other girls showered upon her.

A couple more days went by without any news with regard to Miss St. Leger's movements. The whispering on the stairs and the mysterious footsteps seemed to Betty to sound oftener than ever through the house during the night; but now that she had, as she expressed it, in a sort of way "sold herself to the enemy," she felt more powerless than ever to interfere.

One evening she was in her bedroom when there came a knock at the door. She said, "Come in," and Henny's piquant, charming face showed itself.

"Are you all alone, Betty?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Betty.

"You are sure that the 'Earnest Student' will not put in an appearance?"

"No," answered Betty, with a little frown, for she disliked anyone attempting to ridicule Lotty. "Lotty is in the inner schoolroom, reading history."

"Well, that's all right. I want to talk to you. I wonder, Betty, if you'd be awfully, awfully tremendously good-natured?"

"In what way?" asked Betty.

"Well, it's not to me—it's to poor mademoiselle. The poor dear is in great trouble."

Betty felt herself turning into ice. No amount of soft words on mademoiselle's part could make her tolerate her.

"I'm afraid I can't help her," she said.

"Oh, yes, you can! Don't talk in that icy, prudish, grand lady sort of voice. You know you've got the tenderest little heart in the world, Betty, and mademoiselle admires you so much; she says we none of us have got the strength of character you have."

Betty was silent.

Henny seated herself on one of the beds, and putting her arm round Betty's waist, drew her down to sit next to her.

"It's me you've got to oblige, really," she said, speaking in her most coaxing voice. "I promised mademoiselle that I'd help her, and now I find

that I can't. You wouldn't be so ill-natured as not to oblige me, would you, Betty?"

"Oh, no; I'd like to oblige you, very much, Henny," replied Betty.

"There's a darling! You don't know how tremendously fond I'm getting of you; I'm mad with jealousy of Lotty. Why should she have you all to herself as her special friend? I'm sure she scarcely takes a bit of notice of you. But then, poor old dreamer——"

"I'll hate you if you call her names," said Betty.

"Well, well, I won't! anything to oblige you. Now, Bettina, the question of questions is this: if you can help me, will you?"

"Of course I will," said Betty promptly.

"Then I consider the thing accomplished, for you can. Marian told me that you had some money, Betty—quite a lot. Is it true?"

"I have some money," said Betty. "How does Marian know?"

"She said you told her. You showed her some of your pretty things one day, and she saw your sealskin purse, and you told her there was money in it. O Betty, I wonder how much?"

"It's there for a purpose," said Betty, in a dogged voice. "I can't give it to anybody, so it doesn't matter how much is there."

"O Bettina, who wants to take your poor

little money? Only mademoiselle is in dreadful, dreadful trouble about a relation, and she wants a pound so dreadfully; and if you have as much money as that, rich little Bettina, and would lend it for one week, not to mademoiselle, but to me, oh, how I should love you, and how mademoiselle would bless you!"

While Henny was speaking, Betty remembered the fat lady whom mademoiselle called Ernestine, and who asked in such an eager voice for half a sovereign. From the tone of that lady's voice, she seemed to want the half sovereign very badly indeed.

Betty did not speak for a moment; then she said:

"I don't know why I should part with my money. I haven't much, and I don't know when I shall get any more; and it is kept for—oh, such a special reason! How can I tell it's only to be borrowed, Henny?"

"But it is; there's no doubt of it. Mademoiselle is paid her salary every month, and the next month's salary will be due on Tuesday. This is Friday. See, she has written it all on a piece of paper. Here are her very words."

As Henny spoke, she unfolded a sheet of foreign note-paper, and there, in mademoiselle's pointed writing, was the following sentence:

"I promise to pay one pound to my dear pupil

Betty Falkoner, on the day when I receive my next month's salary."

"There!" said Henny with a smile of triumph, "am not I business-like? Why, that letter is as good as the money itself. She'd have to go to prison if she broke her promise in that letter. If you have a pound in your purse, Betty, it does seem selfish not to lend it for one week, for it can do so much good, and prevent so much dreadful misery. Poor mademoiselle! how she cried and how she wrung her hands, and how she begged and implored of me, down on her knees, I assure you, Betty, to ask you to come to the rescue if I could not help her myself! I said I'd try, and then she gave me this letter to take to you, and I know you'll yield; I know you'll say yes, dear, kind little Betty. It's only till Tuesday, remember that; and you can't want the pound for that special purpose before Tuesday, can you, Bettina?"

"No," said Betty in a low voice, "no." She hated that letter of mademoiselle's: she hated Henny at that moment, she hated the thought of that money, so precious, so sacred, which was kept to pay, year by year, for the flowers for mother's grave, being spent in this fashion; she hated the bare thought of mademoiselle's fingers touching this gold; nevertheless she yielded, and taking her last sovereign from her little sealskin purse, she put it into Henny's hands, turning away to burst into bitter tears as she did so.

CHAPTER XV.

THE THREEFOLD COMPETITION.

AS soon as ever she got the sovereign, Henny did not waste time petting or comforting Betty. It is true she called her a "brave and spirited darling," and begged of her to wipe her eyes and cheer up, and to remember all the good she had done. But before Betty had attempted to wipe her eyes or to cheer up, Henny rushed out of the room, banging the door behind her. Betty sat still on the edge of her own bed, holding the sealskin purse in her hand. She had two or three shillings still left from her former pound, but the sovereign—the beautiful, solid-looking sovereign—was gone. Only a schoolgirl like Betty knows all the riches and all the dreams bound up in an unbroken sovereign, and only a child under Betty's very special circumstances can guess what this sovereign meant to her.

She was sitting now, the tears unwiped away on her cheeks, and the purse still in her hands, when Lotty, in her usual sweeping fashion, burst into the room She came in in a frantic hurry

intent on a German exercise she was preparing: she had left her German dictionary in her bedroom the day before, and came now to fetch it.

The sight of Betty, however, with her pale, tear-stained face, arrested her attention. She stopped to ask what was the matter.

"O Lotty, if only you'd come down out of the clouds," said poor Betty. "I'm in such dreadful trouble. I seem to be going hopelessly wrong every day, and now mother's sovereign, which was to buy flowers for her grave for two whole years, is gone, and what shall I do? I'm sure, I'm quite sure that I'll never, never see it again. Oh, what *shall* I do?"

"Tell me as quickly as you can," said Lotty. She stopped as if with an effort, and came up to Betty's side. "I'll do my best not to think of my German exercise," she continued, "although it is most absorbing. Be quick and tell me what your trouble is, Betty. I don't want to get into the clouds where you are concerned." Here Lotty pushed her long fingers through her thick black hair; it seemed to stick up all over her head and gave her an owl-like appearance.

"I wish you'd be quick," she continued; "you know I've no time to waste."

Then Betty told her story, and Lotty listened with a sort of emphatic attention which was infinitely soothing.

"And now what do you think?" said Betty, when she had come to the end of her narrative. "Is it true that this piece of paper would put mademoiselle in prison? And do you think—are you certain—that she will pay me back the sovereign on Tuesday?"

"That paper is gammon," said Lotty; "it means nothing at all. You don't suppose, if you could put mademoiselle in prison, that you'd do it: now, do you? And as to your getting your sovereign on Tuesday, well, I shall be greatly surprised if you ever see it again. You certainly were a little goose, Betty; I'm surprised at you for being such a softy. But there, for pity's sake, don't cry, and don't look so miserable a moment longer. When I get my fifteen guineas you shall have one of them, and now come downstairs and help me with my exercise; you can look out the words that I want in the dictionary."

The next morning a letter arrived from Miss St. Leger, which was on the whole a great relief to poor Betty. She had arranged matters to her satisfaction for her sick cousin, and would be back again at Melville Hall on Saturday evening.

There was a sort of little cheer in the school when Miss Marshall read this announcement aloud, but there was nothing very hearty about it; only, as Lotty afterward remarked, the forerunner of Miss St. Leger's nature seemed to pre-

cede her on the wings of the wind, and from that moment haste—hot haste—began again in the school. The servants rushed about, cleaning and scrubbing and dusting and brushing; Miss Marshall puckered her brows over the accounts, and put the cook into a frightful temper by overhauling the store rooms; and mademoiselle kept the girls to their books, and was very sedate and proper. And the girls themselves worked with a new-born energy, and took their walks with spirit, and played in recreation hours with a certain kind of healthy life in their games; and if anyone whispered to another, the whispering was done on the quiet; and if there was an air of mystery, it was kept well under; and at night there were no more stealthy footsteps, and Betty slept soundly.

Then Miss St. Leger arrived, looking tired and worn, and the girls all trooped into the hall to meet her. She pecked each of them on the cheek, and then turned sharply to Miss Marshall.

"I'm fairly famished, Sarah," she said, "and want my tea in a trice. Is it ready? Girls, you can all go back to your books; I have no time to attend to you to-night. Is that you, Alice? Have you seen to my box? Williams had better take it straight up to my room; and tell him to be sure to wipe his feet. Now then, my dears, what are you gaping and staring for? Back

again, all of you, to your schoolroom : this is the preparation hour."

"If you'll come this way, Agatha," said Miss Marshall, "you'll find tea all ready."

Miss St. Leger turned in her quick way, and fat, soft little Miss Marshall followed in her train.

"She takes my breath away," said Henny, as she went back with her companions to the schoolroom, but no one else made any remark. Miss St. Leger's influence was again over the house, and the spirit of riot and disorder was effectually quelled for the time being.

Lotty, as she dropped off to sleep that night, wondered if any definite news had arrived with regard to the great prize. She thought it highly probable, for she knew that Miss St. Leger was to see Mrs. Rivers while in town.

"What are you thinking of, Betty?" she called to her little companion.

Betty raised her head from her white pillow.

"I'm thinking of pay day," she said. "I wonder if Miss St. Leger will pay mademoiselle on Tuesday, and if I shall get my sovereign back."

"I wouldn't count on it, if I were you," said Lotty; "but oh, if I get the prize—the wonderful prize!"

Betty let her head sink into her pillow; she was too sad and depressed to care to listen to Lotty's rhapsodies just then.

The next day was Sunday, which passed with a little more order and method even than usual. Everybody was in time for everything, for even on Sunday Miss St. Leger thought it a crying sin to waste a moment.

Then Monday morning came, and after prayers the news which meant so much to poor Lotty was formally announced.

"I wish to tell you all, my dear girls," said Miss St. Leger, "that my kind old friend, Mrs. Rivers, has remembered me and my girls once again. She has offered a valuable money prize to be competed for among you all, irrespective of age. She has laid down strict rules for the successful winner of this prize, and proposes that it shall be given when our school breaks up at the end of June. I have got the rules taken down from my old friend's notes, and will read them to any girl who will come to me to my study this evening. I shall be disengaged to answer questions with regard to the prize from eight to nine to-night; and as I wish the whole matter to be settled as quickly as possible, I shall be glad if those of you who wish to compete would come to the study during that hour. I presume you will all try, for the prize is to be fifteen guineas; and fifteen guineas, as I dare say you know, is a nice little nest egg for any girl. Now go, my dears, to your tasks; work diligently, don't waste a moment. I shall be in

the schoolroom within an hour's time, and hope that you have all made good progress in your studies during my absence."

The girls went away silently. The news of the prize excited them all more or less, but with Miss St. Leger in the house, there was no time for talk or idle gossip during the hours devoted to work. At half-past eleven they all went out for their walk, mademoiselle as usual accompanying them. They decided not to take Jasper and the governess cart, and walked briskly along the roads, which were now blossoming out into their spring beauty. Betty, although she disliked it very much, was for the present in the position of everybody's favorite. Henny called to her to walk with her, and mademoiselle said she would feel honored if *la petite* would let her accompany her at the other side. Betty, who longed to talk to Lotty on the subject of the prize, looked wildly round her for the means of escape for a moment; but Lotty, with her head in the air, and her eyes fixed on the clouds, attached herself, without in the least knowing that she had done so, to Bella Steel, and Betty had to walk between mademoiselle and Henny.

"Are you going to try for that stupid old prize, Betty?" Henny asked.

"Stupid?" said Betty, opening her eyes. "I

think it's just magnificent! Oh, yes, I'm going to try, but I haven't any chance."

"You think Lotty will win it? I told you I was jealous of Lotty, and your opinion of her is quite absurd."

"Why don't you let her alone?" said Betty almost crossly; "you are always dragging her name in. I didn't say a word about her."

"Gently, gently, *mignonne!*" said mademoiselle; "don't let the little temper rise, *chérie.* It is bad, bad of the little temper to be always jumping up in the way it does."

"Oh, I didn't mean to be cross," said poor Betty, "but somehow I seem to be always rubbed the wrong way."

"That is the discipline so necessary for your future life," said mademoiselle. "But now to return to the subject of the great prize. I hope sincere that all my dear pupils will compete. It would be the soul of black ingratitude to that good, dear, generous lady not to try for the beautiful money she promises. Ah, what would not such a sum be to me! What would I not give to be a young dear pupil competing for this prize!"

Betty looked at mademoiselle when she said this. The eyes of the innocent child and the worldly woman met. There was something in the forlorn expression of mademoiselle's eyes which

made Betty for the first time in her life conscious of a real sense of pity for her.

"Ah, my little one, you sympathize—you understand," said the governess. "Yours is the great heart: I will pour mine out to you some day, if permitted."

Betty shrank immediately into her shell. She had no desire that mademoiselle should outpour her heart to her, and eagerly turned to talk to Henny about the prize.

"Oh, yes! I mean to try," said that young lady; "for that matter, I expect we all mean to try, but I am afraid I feel rather sorry that it is offered. There'll be nothing thought of between now and the holidays but this wretched competition. It will revolutionize everything, and then there'll be so many rules attached that, big as it is, it will scarcely be worth the trouble of fighting for."

"What kind of rules?" asked Betty.

"Oh, wait until you hear Miss St. Leger read them out to us to-night. They'll be formidable enough, I can tell you. All things considered, I should not be a bit surprised, Betty, if you won the fifteen guineas."

"Oh, what nonsense!" said Betty, coloring brightly. "Why, I'm not a scrap clever. Miss St. Leger says that I don't know anything."

"But the prize doesn't depend on cleverness. If all were known, it depends principally on the

caprice of a cranky old lady. Now do let's talk of something else."

Mademoiselle had business as usual in the village, and the girls waited for her at the cross-roads where poor Betty had spent such a miserable half-hour. She shivered even now as she looked at the place where she had lain hidden. The day was a genial one in early April, as different as possible from that blustering morning a little over a week ago.

"I wonder why mademoiselle has to go to the village *every* day," thought Betty; "but there, now that Miss St. Leger is at home, I need not trouble about her. If only I could get my dear sovereign back again, I think I should feel quite light-hearted."

Lotty beckoned to Betty at this moment, and she had the felicity of walking back to school by her friend's side.

Of course, Lotty began to speak at once of the prize.

"They're all going to try for it," she said. "On the whole, I'm rather glad; it makes it more exciting."

"Do you really think you'll win, Lotty?" asked Betty.

Lotty's eyes seemed to leap with a sudden light as she turned and looked at her companion.

"Yes," she said in a deep, emphatic voice.

"I'll win. No one else has my reason: it will help me to conquer every obstacle. I don't feel any doubt about it, Betty. I feel as sure of those fifteen guineas as if I had the treasure already in my hands."

"Oh, but, Lotty, I wish you wouldn't!" said Betty.

"What do you mean?"

"I think it's dreadful to feel so absolutely sure."

"It isn't in my case, when I have such a reason and such a motive impelling me forward. I'm certain on the subject, but I'm glad you're all going to compete with me: it makes it more exciting."

Lotty panted as she spoke.

"Think of the seaside for mother," she said. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! my heart almost chokes me; it beats so hard."

"Suppose," said Betty, "just for the sake of saying it, I mean, because, of course, I haven't a chance; but suppose I won the prize, would you hate me?"

Lotty stopped for a moment, then she drew Betty's hand through her arm.

"No, I wouldn't hate you, little darling," she said; "but you won't win the prize, so you needn't think about it."

"Did you tell that to all the other girls?" asked

Betty, with a laugh. "They must have felt encouraged to try if you did."

Lotty laughed also.

"Not I," she said. "Do you think I'd be such a goose? I said, in my most modest voice, that I meant to have a little try for the great big plum. You don't suppose I wear my heart on my sleeve in that fashion, eh, Betty?"

Soon after eight o'clock that evening a modest knock was heard at the door of Miss St. Leger's sitting room; she said "Come in," and Betty entered. She had scarcely time to seat herself before another knock preluded the arrival of Elsie, Rose, and Marian; they were followed in due course by Bella Steel and Henrietta; and after a little longer pause, Lotty, in her usual bouncing and ungainly fashion, tumbled, rather than walked, into the room.

"Charlotte, how often have I to speak about the way you hold yourself?" said Miss St. Leger. "Is it necessary for your head to announce the arrival of the rest of your body? I do wish, my dear, you would try and remember that human beings are meant to stand upright."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" said Lotty, pushing back her cloud of black hair from her high brow. She flopped down as she spoke into the first vacant chair she could find, and fixed her big eager eyes hungrily on Miss St. Leger. She was so thirsty

to know what the rules were with regard to the great prize, that she had forgotten her scolding as soon as it was uttered.

Miss St. Leger looked round at the seven girls, who, seated in different positions, were gathered round her.

"Well, my dears," she said, "as you have all come to see me on the subject, I presume you all mean to compete for the prize."

"I think we all mean to compete," said Henny, glancing, as she spoke, at her companions. Lotty nodded; the others smiled.

"I am glad to hear it," said Miss St. Leger. "The news will please Mrs. Rivers; and as the prize is valuable, it is worth taking trouble for. I will now read you the rules which the competitors must conform to."

As Miss St. Leger spoke, she opened her davenport, and taking out a long envelope, unfolded a sheet of foolscap paper. Putting on her spectacles, she proceeded to read aloud from it.

"The girls who compete for my fifteen guineas [wrote Mrs. Rivers] are to try for the prize in three ways: first, as regards learning; second, as regards conduct; third, as regards beauty of nature and person. I will ask my dear friend, Miss St. Leger, to draw up rules for this threefold competition, but I reserve the right of choosing the winner of the prize myself. I propose to come to Melville Hall the day before the break-up. I shall be present at the examination, which all the competitors must undergo, and

will in conclusion adjudge the prize as I think fit. I hope Miss St. Leger's girls will work with a will, for, in my opinion, the charms of learning, of conduct, and of grace ought to surround all women worthy of the name.

"I am, the affectionate friend and well-wisher of the girls of Melville Hall,

"FRANCES MARY RIVERS."

After the reading of this rather extraordinaay document, there was an interval of dead silence. Miss St. Leger laid the paper on her lap, uttered a faint and scarcely audible sigh, and looked into the fire. Henny bridled and drew herself up; she felt certain that she would score well as regarded personal beauty. Lotty's big eyes looked brighter than ever; her lips took a determined curve.

"Well," said Miss St. Leger after a pause, "how do my friend's rules strike you?"

There was again a little silence; then Betty spoke.

"Mrs. Rivers wants someone to be perfect," she said; "but as no one is perfect, I suppose no one will win the prize."

"Mrs. Rivers expects no one to be perfect," corrected Miss St. Leger, "but she wishes the girls who try for this money to aim at perfection. Even if you fall short of it, girls, immeasurably short, it is well to have a high ideal. Mrs. Rivers has her own eccentric ideas with regard to perfection. I allow this prize to be competed for, but

I do not think," added Miss St. Leger, "that what she expects can be won with gold. However, it will do you all no harm to try, and I now proceed to give you my ideas with regard to the easiest part of her scheme—that which applies to learning."

Here again Miss St. Leger paused; Lotty's brilliant eyes seemed to fix her: she looked full at her cleverest pupil.

"I do not wish," she said, "to have any of your thoughts taken away from the immediate and everyday duties of your school life. I have talked over this part of the scheme with Mrs. Rivers, and have told her that I should not set you a long task. She herself suggested that the test of learning should consist of a neatly written theme or piece of poetry, which is to be your own composition, and will be read aloud on the day of the prize-giving. You may take a week from now to choose the subject you each wish to write on, and I must have the prize papers, which are not to consist of more than a thousand words in prose, and fifty lines in poetry, delivered into my safe keeping by the 15th of June. These poems or themes are to be written only in the hours devoted to recreation. As to your conduct, girls, anyone who, between now and the day of the break-up, is convicted of deceit, or any other grave fault of that character, will be unable to

compete. Full marks for neatness of person, full marks for punctuality and conduct generally, will all tell in your favor with Mrs. Rivers when the happy day arrives. Now, as to beauty of person and character, I think I must leave the matter entirely in your own hands: you know yourselves, or you ought to know, what a beautiful soul joined to a beautiful face means. I have a theory which may be considered queer and old-fashioned, but which I should like to mention here. I think the soul makes the face: the ugly soul makes good features unpleasing; the beautiful soul makes a plain face lovely. I don't know, however, what Mrs. Rivers' ideas are on this subject. Now, my dears, think over your themes; think also as much as you like on the competition for conduct and beauty. I shall wish to have your decisions with regard to the themes or poems by this day week, when I will meet you all here at the same hour. Go now, my dears. I hope you will try your best. I hope the one who truly deserves the prize will get it, and that the rest of you, when the hour comes, will rejoice in her success."

CHAPTER XVI.

A TONIC.

AFTER the girls left Miss St. Leger, Bella, Henny, the St. Legers, and Betty all began to talk eagerly, to criticise Mrs. Rivers, and to express their opinions frankly with regard to the extraordinary competitions set them: Lotty, however, was strangely silent. With all her *gaucherie*, she was not the sort of girl with whom any of her companions would attempt to take liberties; there was something exclusive about Lotty—she kept herself, as the old saying is, "to herself." It was difficult, almost impossible, to break through the reserve which surrounded her like a cloak.

Lessons for the day were all over, and the girls sat in the pleasant recreation room, amusing themselves exactly as they pleased. Henny, with a meaning glance at her companions, took out a handkerchief which she was embroidering exquisitely.

"My initials on this morsel of cambric may assist me by and by," she said.

"O Henny," said Bella, "you are safe to score

one in the beauty competition; yours is exactly the sort of face to fascinate a particular old lady. Why, your features are almost old-fashionedly correct; then your complexion, my dear—the lilies and roses painted on that blooming face might almost have been done by the hand of art. Yes, Henny, you will come out first in this competition, without any doubt; your conduct has only to match your face, and your learning to correspond with your general amiability, and the prize will be yours. How will you spend your fifteen guineas, *mignonne?* May any of your humble adorers expect some pickings from the grand plum?"

Henny bridled, and drew herself up.

"I'm not conceited enough to suppose I shall get it," she said; "but if I do, I know what I'll do with it."

"Do tell us, beloved," said Elsie St. Leger.

"I shall buy a gray silk dress with part of it, and a set of coral, and a ring. If there's any over, I'll keep the balance for bonbons."

Elsie smacked her lips in anticipation.

"For my part," said poor, plain little Rose in a sulky voice, "I think it's perfectly horrid of Mrs. Rivers to put in a clause about beauty; how can a girl help her personal appearance? It's enough to encourage vanity. I wonder Aunt Agatha consents to anything so demoralizing."

"Oh, do listen to Rose and her grand words!" said Marian. "You'll kill me, Rose, if you talk in that affected way any longer. For my part, I see nothing for it but to let the beauty part of the competition take care of itself, and to work up the theme part carefully. I'm going to do couplets: I'm not at all bad at them: I can rhyme almost any word."

"And you call that sort of thing poetry," said Bella; "your couplets are only jingles, Marian, and poor at that."

Marian pouted.

"I'm glad to say you are not the person to adjudge the prize, Bella," she said. "Everyone knows that Mrs. Rivers is eccentric; perhaps her taste lies in jingles—who can possibly say?"

"And perhaps she likes somewhat plain faces like mine," interrupted Rose with a gleam of hope. Most of her companions shrieked, but Betty sat grave and silent. Now and then she looked at Lotty; then she sighed. Lotty was bending over the table, her fingers as usual pressed to her ears, her lips slowly moving as she devoured "Hamlet." Lotty's thoughts were miles away.

At last the hour for bed arrived; the girls went to their several rooms, and Betty and Lotty were alone.

As soon as ever she came into her bedroom, Lotty's dreamy eyes seemed to awake; her face became active, interested, and alert.

"Do light both the candles, Betty," she said.

"Why both of them?" asked Betty.

"Oh, don't argue; light them; put them one at each side of the glass. Now, then, I want to examine my face. Honestly, I have not looked at it fully for months: it may have improved, there's no saying. I never thought of it at all until to-night. What a bore that beauty competition is! Now, truthful Bettina, come and tell me what you see."

Betty came and stood near Lotty; Lotty knelt before the glass, and gazed at her own image.

"Now speak, Bettina—what see you? I'm not a judge of beauty; for aught I can tell, a snub nose and a rather wide mouth may be the correct thing. If so, I win; if not—speak, Bettina."

"As far as I'm concerned," said Betty, puckering her brows anxiously, "you have far and away the nicest face of any of the girls."

Lotty looked up at Betty with a hopeful gleam.

"You love me," she said. "I want the honest truth. How would I appear to a stranger?"

"I'm trying to think," said Betty. "I'm afraid —I'm awfully afraid that your figure isn't much."

"Never mind the figure; come to the face."

"Well, they none of them have your eyes, Lotty; they can be perfectly splendid at times. I can see them when thought flashes into them·

they seem to light up! and oh, sometimes they look so sweet! And there's a sort of strong look about you, Lotty; and then you've got a good forehead, and quantities of hair."

"Yes," said Lotty in a reflective voice, "the forehead is high; I suppose it's broad, too, but it's certainly high. The hair is coarse. Granted that the eyes are good, what about the complexion, Bettina?"

"Well, it's a little—just a little dark, isn't it?"

"And sunburned," said Lotty, springing suddenly away from the glass, and blowing out one of the candles. "Put the other candle on the chimney-piece, Betty. I'm plain, hoplessly plain at present. Now the job is, how am I to be made beautiful between now and midsummer? It's a most anxious point, for I simply must get that prize. How do you think a fringe would suit me?"

"O Lotty, you wouldn't look nice in it; it would take all your character away, and it would be such a sin to cut that beautiful hair."

"Oh, bother the hair! what does that matter? It makes a great difference, I can tell you, when one's head is stylishly arranged. Then, as to my figure, I must lose this poke somehow. You must drill me in private every evening, Betty; you must teach me to tread softly, to enter a room and to leave it with grace. Oh, what an awful, awful

business it will be! but thank goodness, it will only last about three months. When once I've got the prize, I can become as ungainly as ever. Oh, my hands, aren't they hopeless? And my feet, they're as flat as plates. Dear, dear! it is a worry. As to my complexion, the best I can do for it is to wash my face every night with buttermilk. I believe it takes off sunburn."

"I'm sure you needn't do that," said Betty, laughing in spite herself. "Mrs. Rivers can't mean that we're to make ourselves different from what God meant us to be. All you've got to do is to try to be tidy, Lotty, and not to ink-stain your fingers, nor the tip of your nose, so often as you do at present."

Lotty gazed hard at Betty for about a minute.

"It's all very fine to talk," she said after a long pause, "but Mrs. Rivers doesn't know that I have got a mother, and that it is absolutely necessary for her to get some sea-breezes to make her strong and well for all her winter's work. I'm going to get that prize, come what may. I *wish* I wasn't such an ugly pig. Now good-night, Bettina."

Betty knelt down by her bedside to say her prayers. She had her own quaint ideas with regard to prayer, and she did not think it wrong to say to-night: "Please, God, if you can possibly manage it, make dear Lotty a little beautiful."

She felt cheerful when she rose from her knees, and almost inclined to congratulate Lotty beforehand on the prize which she was sure to win.

Lotty, however, was already in bed and asleep.

The next morning Betty's own anxieties returned to press upon her attention. Ever since Miss St. Leger's return she had been afraid that she would specially question her with regard to the letter which she had written. Up to the present, however, she had said nothing, and the little girl began to hope that she would escape the sharp scrutiny of her mistress. Tuesday was pay day, and she hoped to have her sovereign back in the evening. Her sealskin purse contained only half a crown now, and although the time when she was to send five shillings to the gardener at the Brompton Cemetery was still a good way off, yet Betty could not be happy until her precious sovereign, which was devoted to so solemn a purpose, was once more in her possession.

It is true she was allowed fourpence a week pocket money, but this small sum did not go very far, when stamps and note paper had to be purchased out of it. Betty's foreign letter to her father was always a serious affair, and had to be attended to as a religious duty; she also wrote at intervals to Hester. In consequence she had not up to the present been able to save any of her pocket money.

When the girls went out for their walk on Tuesday, Betty ran up to Henny, and pulled her sleeve.

Jasper was coming with them on this occasion, and Henny was in the act of getting into the governess cart.

"Well, what is it?" she asked in a somewhat irritable tone. "Do you want to come with me for the first part of the drive? But you can't. I promised mademoiselle, and as she is as heavy as two of us put together, poor Jasper would refuse to take any more."

"I don't at all want to come with you and mademoiselle," said Betty; "but please, Henny, you remember."

"What?" asked Henrietta. "I do wish you wouldn't be so mysterious, Betty."

"Oh," said Betty, coloring crimson, "you were very kind and sweet to me the other night, when you wanted it so badly; but now——"

"But now," interrupted Henrietta, changing her tone, and becoming somewhat anxious. "Oh, it's all right; I didn't know at first what you were alluding to. For goodness' sake, don't speak so loud. Here comes mademoiselle; she'll hear us."

"Yes, I want her to," said Betty. "It's pay day; you promised faithfully, Henny, that I should have the money back to-night."

"I'll speak to mademoiselle," said Henrietta;

"it will be all right, of course. Oh, here you are, mademoiselle. Betty, if you mean to walk, you had better follow the others."

Mademoiselle, dressed in a very becoming hat and jacket, came smilingly up to the two girls.

"Why shouldn't this dear *petite* come with us?" she said, laying her thin hand with a heavy pressure on Betty's shoulder.

"Oh, thanks! I don't want to," said the little girl. She ran off at once, rubbing her shoulder as she did so, for she could not bear mademoiselle to touch her.

On the return walk the girls unexpectedly came up to Miss St. Leger at the cross roads.

"Here you all are," she exclaimed in her brisk way. "I hope you enjoyed your walk: it's a fine bright day, good for plants and young people. I have not a moment to stay talking to you, my dears. I am going to take this short cut home across the fields. Oh, by the way, Betty Falkoner, you may as well come with me; you can carry this basket. There, be careful you don't drop it."

A rather heavy basket full of eggs was given to Betty to carry, and almost before she had time to breathe, as she herself expressed it, she was careering along a field in company with Miss St. Leger, at a kind of little trot, between a walk and a run.

"Well, Betty, how are you getting on?" said her mistress. "You are looking quite healthy, and I think you are stouter than you were. I heard from your father a week ago, and told him in reply that you seemed to be getting on famously. On the whole, I think you are a well-meaning child, and I hope, after a time, you will learn to conquer that weakness and vacillation, which at present are spoiling your character."

"I don't think I quite know what you mean," said Betty; she shook all over as she spoke.

Miss St. Leger fixed her for an instant with her bright blue eyes.

"You were afraid when you wrote me that letter, Betty," she said. "I could read fear, weakness, uncertainty in every line of it. I had thought better things of you; but never mind, you are young yet at school life. Your character is absolutely unformed, more so even than I thought. It is a great thing, however, to be thoroughly aware of one's faults; that is the first step toward curing them."

"Oh, but," said Betty, "you can't know, you can never guess, what I suffered."

"My dear," said Miss St. Leger, "don't tell tales of your companions. I thought you would be brave enough not to mind a little ridicule. The course is to go straight on, and to do the best thing at the moment; never to fear, if you know

the thing is right. If, Betty, you are certain that it is right for you to do a particular thing, if you are a brave woman, you will do it, and let the consequences take care of themselves. The consequences, my dear," continued Miss St. Leger, with a sudden gravity, and an earnest look about her face, which Betty had never before noticed there, "in that case belong to God, and he will look after them."

"Thank you," said Betty; the words were bracing, like a very strong tonic. A moment or two later they reached the house.

"I will try to be brave," said Betty, looking with her sweet face at the hard, rather withered one of her governess.

"I believe you mean well," said Miss St. Leger, patting her on the cheek. "Now rush upstairs, and take off your things; no loitering, pray."

CHAPTER XVII.

PAY DAY AND A COMPETITION.

BETTY wondered during the rest of that day at what exact hour pay was given out. It was certainly not given in the presence of the girls, and she was much puzzled to know what moment of leisure mademoiselle had to receive it in, and what moment of leisure the mistress of the school had to give it in. Rush, hurry, scamper had begun again with a vengeance. "If I had heart disease, I'd die in this place," murmured Henny. "Even to look at Agatha puts me out of breath. Why does she always trot instead of walking? and why, even when she speaks, does she give one a sensation of gasping? Look at me, Betty; we have a moment just to exchange a word with each other. Tell me, Betty: don't you find Agatha terribly trying?"

"Now and then I do," answered Betty, "but she's tonicky, and I like her."

Henny held up her slim hands in horror.

The two girls were busy preparing their history lessons. At this moment the door opened and mademoiselle came in.

Betty looked up anxiously. She instantly guessed, by something in the expresssion of the French governess' face, that pay had taken place. She did not quite know herself why she was so sure of this, still she was sure; and she could not help dividing her attention between her history lesson and that sovereign which by right belonged to her, and was at that moment comfortably reposing in mademoiselle's pocket. She wondered by what possible means it could be got out of the pocket and into her sealskin purse.

Mademoiselle, not wishing to interrupt the preparation which was going on, sat down softly by the window, and, taking up a book, pretended to read. Mademoiselle was not in the least intellectual. She hated all books except novels; and as all novels, except Scott's and Dickens', were tabooed in this school, she found the present volume, a treatise on the life of plants, intensely dull. She yawned several times, and finally closing the pages, looked straight before her. Raising her eyes suddenly, she met the peculiar greeny-yellowy orbs of Betty. There was something particularly speaking in Betty's eyes; they had a great pathos about them, and a wonderful power of expression. Mademoiselle knew just as well as if Betty had spoken that her eyes were asking her for the sovereign.

"No, no, *petite*," she murmured under her

breath. Then, as troubled and anxious thoughts came to her—for the poor woman had a great deal more than anyone knew about to make her miserable—her own face took a pensive gaze, her own eyes grew pathetic, her mouth drooped.

Betty felt fascinated by her face. She could not give her attention to the long dead and gone woes of Charles the First, while her own heart ached, and mademoiselle looked so queer, and so —so wretched.

"Bad marks for history to-morrow," she murmured under her breath, and as the thought escaped her, the hour for preparation was over, and the girls rose from their seats. Mademoiselle instantly came up to Betty.

"Can I speak to you, *petite?*" she said in a low voice.

"Certainly," replied Betty. Her heart began to beat.

Henny gave her a quick sort of warning glance. She suddenly bent forward and whispered in Betty's ear:

"As you are strong, be merciful."

"I don't know what you mean," said Betty, speaking aloud in some anger.

"Come, *petite*," said mademoiselle from the door of the schoolroom.

Betty ran after her; they went down a corridor side by side. Suddenly Lotty passed them

"We're all going to talk over our themes," she said to Betty.

"This most dear *petite* shall join you in a moment or two, Mlle. Lotty," said the governess.

Lotty hurried off to the preparation room.

"I must be quick," said Betty, looking up at the French teacher.

"Yes, *chérie*. *Quick*, that is the word," said mademoiselle. "I know your thoughts, little dear one; you are saying to yourself——"

"I am saying to myself that I want my sovereign," said Betty with that sort of downright manner which took people by surprise in her character.

"And you shall have it, most truly you shall have it."

Betty held out her hand.

"Shall we walk up and down this well-worn corridor?" said mademoiselle, pretending not to see the slim, tremulous hand. "Madame is so kind in the matter of warmth. Ah, I shivere most times in England, but not with madame; she is sharp, vere sharp, but she understands the shiveres of this inhospitable clime."

Betty had turned away her head.

"May I have my sovereign, mademoiselle?" she said. "Henny said I should have it back without fail on Tuesday; she said Tuesday was pay day. Have you been paid, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, I have been paid, leetle Betty," said mademoiselle. Her light brown eyes looked into Betty's, her thin lips quivered, a spasm crossed her sallow face.

"I will give you back the sovereign," said mademoiselle, after what seemed an unending pause to the waiting child, "if you insist that I do, after I have said my little say. I am in great trouble, Bettina. On Friday night, when you listened to the cry of Henny and you gave me your gold, I was saved from a desolation too great even to mention. You want the money back. I give it to you. Yes, here it is." Mademoiselle put her hand into her pocket, and took out a sovereign.

"I get four of these monthly," she said; "but four, and only one day in each month. With this money I save for the time of rain, with this money I help those dear to me. It go not far, little Betty; it soon is spent."

While mademoiselle was speaking, Betty kept on holding out her hand, but mademoiselle kept the sovereign, which she held between her finger and her thumb, quite out of the little girl's reach.

"I pay you back," she said; "I pay you back the money, and I give you my love and blessing; but if you will permit, little Betty, I pay it back, not this month, but next. It make no differ to you, one month, do it, little Betty?"

"Yes, it does," said Betty.

"But you want not to use it; you keep it unused in your purse."

"I want it," said Betty again; "I ought never to have given it. It was in my purse for something—something I can't talk about; something most, most—oh, I can't talk about it, mademoiselle. I can never, never tell you what I want the money for."

"*Pauvre petite!*" said mademoiselle; "then she shall have it; her heart shall not break. Take it, Betty."

Betty tried to, but mademoiselle did not give it.

"Take it, Betty," continued the governess in a theatrical voice; "put it back into the little purse of seal, and let it lie there unbroken and unused, and know that you have failed to save one in great and terrible distress, who would be well and happy—well and happy for life, little Betty Falkoner, if you were generous. No, I speak not of myself—I plead for one other who is dear; but take the money, Betty Falkoner."

"You frighten me," said Betty—"you hurt me. Why do you speak to me like that? If you want a pound so badly, surely Miss St. Leger will give it to you."

"Hush!" said mademoiselle, almost hissing out the word. "Here is Miss St. Leger. Betty, will you—will you be generous, just for one month?"

Betty looked round her in despair. Mademoiselle's eyes were more pleading, her fingers clutched the sovereign with a tighter grip, her hand approached her pocket. Miss St. Leger's quick, running step was distinctly heard.

"Will you be generous for one little month, kindest of Betties?"

"Yes, yes," answered Betty; "it breaks my heart, but I'll do it." She rushed down the corridor; there was a singing in her ears, and for a moment she did not see anything very distinctly. Mademoiselle looked after the retreating figure of the child with a smile of triumph; then she turned—all trace of passion having left her face—to say something in her usual punctilious voice to Miss St. Leger.

Betty stood for a moment to recover herself at the door of the recreation room; then she opened it and went in.

All the girls were present, seated round the fire. Henny looked up with a gleam of anxiety in her pretty eyes. One glance at Betty's face seemed to content her; she instantly made room for the little girl to seat herself by her side.

Lotty had been talking in an eager voice; she paused for a moment when Betty came in. "I have been saying to the others," she remarked, "what I should like now to repeat to you, that I think the theme on which we write, either in

poetry or prose, should be the same. I think it will simplify matters if we choose a subject—one subject, about which we each give our opinion in our own way, either in poetry or in prose."

Betty passed her hand for a moment across her eyes.

"Yes," she said in a weary sort of voice, bringing her mind as best as she could to bear on the subject.

"It seems to me," said Elsie St. Leger, "that such an arrangement has certain disadvantages. For instance, the subject which will be as easy as A B C to you, Lotty, will be extremely difficult to a humble and inferior personage like myself."

"Not at all," replied Lotty eagerly. "Let's think of a theme which each girl in the school must have some sort of idea about, which each can write about in her own way. I have been considering and considering all day, and it seems to me that the competition leads up to the subject of the theme. Mrs. Rivers gives the prize to whichever girl in this house excels most in learning, takes the highest place as regards character, and is the most beautiful in mind and person. The prize ought really, according to my way of thinking, to be three prizes, for it seems scarcely possible for one of us to combine the whole of these rare virtues; but that, of course, is neither here nor there."

"Of course Mrs. Rivers has the choosing of her own prize competition," said Henny in a prim little voice. "For my part, I was never so interested in a prize competition before. I thought regular features did not count for anything at school, but as I have got them, I mean to make the most of them. I may as well say frankly that I hope I shall score in that branch of the competition. I wrote to mother to-day on the subject, and begged of her to send me, in time for the break-up, the prettiest white frock she could possibly get. I'm going to try my very best to get this extraordinary prize."

"Oh, we're all going to try our very best," said Lotty, emitting a quick flash of fire out of her eyes, "but the subject just at present for consideration is the theme. Are you willing, girls, to have one subject to write on, and one only?"

"I conclude, from your manner, you have a subject to propose," said Bella.

"Yes, I have."

"Well, let's hear it," exclaimed Marian.

"Yes," said Henny, "give us the subject, Lotty, and then we'll tell you whether we'll write on it."

"It's this," said Lotty, springing to her feet. She drew herself up, as she spoke, to her full, fine height; her head no longer poked. Her hair was flung back from her noble brow.

"Let's write on the Perfect Girl," she said.

"That theme must be according to Mrs. Rivers' own heart; it is in reality the subject of the triple competition. Let's write on the Perfect Girl; we can all say something."

"The Perfect Girl," said Henny. "Good gracious! I don't think I'd like to meet her."

"I shouldn't know her even if I saw her," said Elsie.

"You can say so, if you like, in your theme," said Lotty. "You can say anything in the world you fancy about her. Let's open Mrs. Rivers' eyes; let's show her what we girls think of the Perfect Girl."

"The Perpetual Prig would be a better word," laughed Marian.

"Well, I'm not going to turn it into ridicule," said Lotty; "you can, if you please. Mrs. Rivers has her own ideas with regard to the perfect girl, or she would not give us this competition; let's tell her ours."

"It does sound as if it would be rather comical," said Bella. "What do you think, Henny?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Henny. "It's so Lottyish—that's the worst of it."

"Well, Lotty isn't a perfect girl," said Elsie.

"Oh, gracious, no! The poor dear has got too many angles."

"Lotty, precious, on the day of the prize giving

are you going to wear your favorite ink-stain on the tip of your nose?"

"Don't worry," said Lotty. "If this prize is nothing to the rest of you, it means a great deal to me. Are we to choose this theme or not?"

"It strikes me," said Elsie, "that, all things considered, Betty is more like the Perfect Girl than any of the rest of us."

Betty looked up at this moment, and a flush of rosy pink spread over her delicate little face. Henny gazed at her as if she saw something fresh in her features—something which did not quite please her. Was Betty really pretty? Was there something *piquant*, uncommon, fascinating, appealing, in those changing eyes; that gentle, sad, loving mouth?

"I certainly am not perfection," said Betty. "But I like the subject," she continued, "and if it's chosen by the rest of you, I'll give my thoughts upon it as best as I can."

"On the whole, there's a fascination about it," said Marian. "I shall do the Perfect Girl in couplets, or jingles, as the rest of you are pleased to call them."

"Who's for, and who's against?" exclaimed Lotty. "Those who are against hold up their hands."

No hands were uplifted, and Lotty, in a voice of triumph, announced to the meeting that the motion was unanimously carried.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STARVED.

MISS ST. LEGER was perfectly satisfied that the Perfect Girl should be the theme for the competition. She smiled when the subject was proposed by Lotty, and remarked, rather grimly, that she would be glad to get the girls' own ideas with regard to this important product of the nineteenth century.

"Show her to me when you get her," she said. "I've never met her yet, either in the pages of a book, or on the stage of life."

She then gave the girls some further directions with regard to the prize. Having written her theme, it was not to be signed by the writer's proper name; each girl was to adopt a pseudonym for the occasion. The theme, when written, was to be put into an envelope, in which a smaller envelope containing the real name of the writer was to be enclosed. The outer envelope was to be addressed to Miss St. Leger, who on her part would keep it unbroken until the day of the break-up, then it would be handed to Mrs. Rivers, who would herself read the contents, and criticise

the merits of the composition. The girls were to write their themes or their poems out of lesson hours, and Miss St. Leger did not wish to be troubled any further on the matter. They might talk as much as they pleased to one another on the great subject, but it was against the rules of the competition for any one girl to show her work to another.

Having delivered herself of this speech, Miss St. Leger proceeded to talk on different matters of special school interest. The days were getting long; Easter would soon be with them. After Easter she proposed to have several fresh out-of-door amusements. In short, she meant the term from Easter to the summer break-up to be as bright and cheerful and healthful as possible.

It was not the custom for the girls at Melville Hall to go home for Easter. They had a very long vacation in the summer, but only two or three days, which they usually spent at school, in the Easter recess. Lotty, however, to the astonishment of her sister scholars, said that she meant to ask Miss St. Leger to let her go to her mother for a day or two. She gave no reason for this rather remarkable request, for Lotty was far and away the poorest of all the girls, and had, as Miss St. Leger knew well, to think of every penny she spent.

"I thought you would let me go on Thursday,"

said Lotty, stopping Miss St. Leger in her abrupt way one afternoon, "and I could come back on Tuesday morning."

"Go where, my dear?" said Miss St. Leger, looking up at her tall pupil.

"To mother, to Plymouth."

"My dear Lotty, does your mother expect this? I have not heard from her on the subject."

Lotty's face, which was looking very pale and heavy, lit up; the color mounted to her cheeks, and a light filled her eyes.

"Mother doesn't know," she said, "but I—I can't rest; there's something in her letters which —which maddens me."

"My dear child, let me beg of you not to talk in that exaggerated way. There are some points, Lotty, in your character which remind me of Betty Falkoner; she also has this habit of morbid exaggeration. It is a great pity to encourage it. If you wish to speak to me, my dear, come into my room."

Miss St. Leger turned as she spoke, went into her little sitting room, and shut the door. She sat down herself, and took up her knitting. Lotty stood by the table: she did not trouble to hold herself erect; her head was pushed forward, her back stooped, her long thin fingers were clasped tightly together.

"I don't think I've anything to say," she remarked when she awoke from her own abstraction, to notice Miss St. Leger's eyes fixed upon her. "I have had a feeling which I can't explain to you, for you wouldn't understand me, but what perhaps you will best understand by——"

"Yes, my dear Lotty," interrupted Miss St. Leger; "take your time. Believe me, my love, I sympathize with all true and deep feeling; it is exaggerations that I dislike. Have you any reason to fear, Lotty, that your dear mother is not well?"

"She has not said so," replied Lotty, "but I—I've been starved; that's the feeling. And there is a kind of undertone in her letters which makes me unhappy; in short, I cannot rest nor work properly without seeing her."

"I don't wish to hurt you," said Miss St. Leger after a pause, "but is not this mere sentimentality? Your mother does not say she is ill. most probably she is not ill. There is, I feel assured, only the fancy of a nervous girl in what you call the tone of her letters."

Lotty shook her head.

"I am not fancying," she said.

"Then you are simply suffering from a little homesickness, which it is your duty to overcome."

"No, it is not that; I should overcome it, if

that were all. I feel that my mother needs me. I can't explain myself better. I knew you would not understand."

"Don't say that, Lotty. I once had a mother whom I dearly loved. Life has never been the same to me since she died. I understand your feeling, my dear, but what I am not sure about is whether you ought to yield to it. You know what a deep affection I have for your mother; how I sympathize with her; how anxious I am to help both her and you. I repeat that, knowing your circumstances, and knowing your mother's, I doubt whether you ought to yield to what I am persuaded is only a morbid fancy."

Lotty was silent; her hands still worked nervously, her big eyes looked past Miss St. Leger as if they were seeing something invisible to the elder lady.

In truth they were. They were looking into a tiny room, and gazing at the worn face of a tired woman. In imagination Lotty's arms were even now round that woman's neck. Her eyes, with all their young love filling them, were looking into the eyes of the worn woman. Her strength was supporting the weakness of this poor battered traveler on life's journey.

Miss St. Leger rose suddenly from her seat.

"I will find out what the cost of a journey third class from here to Plymouth would be," she

said. She took a volume of Bradshaw from her bookshelf as she spoke.

After a little search she announced the price of a return ticket to Lotty.

"In addition to the ticket," she said, "you must pay for a cab into Dorchester. There will be something for porters, and a trifle of some sort to pay at the other side. In short, you cannot give yourself the gratification of spending a few days with your mother under two pounds. You are a wise girl, thoughtful, considerate, and I do not believe selfish. I will leave the matter, therefore, in your hands. If you decide to go, I will lend you the money; but please understand that it will be two pounds added to the account which your mother will have to pay at the end of the summer term. If you think it right to put her to this extra expense, and to the fatigue of earning this extra money, for the gratification of your own nerves, you shall have it. I'm afraid I cannot say more."

"Thank you," said Lotty. "I will let you know what I decide in the morning."

"You will think over what I have said, my dear pupil."

"Yes, I will think carefully over everything. Good-night, Miss St. Leger."

Lotty went straight back to the preparation room, where she worked hard at her lessons.

This was Monday; if she went at all, it would be on the following Thursday. She did not say a word about her desire even to Betty. In their bedroom that night she was a little less dreamy than usual, and listened to Betty's chatter, and was sympathetic with her over her one great grievance, the loss of her sovereign.

"Look here, Betty," she said; "if mademoiselle does not give you back your money on next pay day, I shall speak myself to Miss St. Leger."

"Oh, no, you daren't," said Betty.

"You see if I don't dare. I'm not going to have this sort of thing going on in the school. Mademoiselle had no right ever to touch your money. Why, you are getting quite thin and hollow-cheeked fretting over it. She'll pay you next time if I give her a hint; so try not to fret, Bettina. Let's go to sleep now; I am tired."

Immediately after prayers the next morning Lotty went to Miss St. Leger and told her that, after carefully considering all the pros and cons, she had made up her mind to put her mother to the expense of seeing her, and would be glad if Miss St. Leger would lend her the money.

When Lotty made this announcement, the mistress did not say a word, but her face grew a little pale, and her lips a trifle firmer than usual.

"Come with me," she said, after a moment's pause, "and I will let you have the two sover-

eigns at once. The fly must be ordered in good time on Thursday, and you had better write at once to your mother, Lotty, to let her know that you are going to her."

"Yes," said Lotty.

Miss St. Leger put two sovereigns into the palm of her pupil's hand.

The moment Lotty felt the touch of the gold which was to bring her to her mother, she drew herself up. The haggard, fagged sort of look left her face. All her heaviness of expression was changed to a bright alertness. She thanked Miss St. Leger, and left the room with a little skip.

"Betty," she said when recess came, "I am going home on Thursday to spend Easter."

Betty gave a start, a flush, and a gasp.

"You'll be glad, won't you, Lotty?" she said.

"Glad!" said Lotty with fervor; "glad! It will be *heaven!* Walk with me when we are out this morning, Bettina: I could not stand any of the other girls."

During the walk Lotty was quite loquacious. She again assured Betty that she was positively certain to win the prize, and that her arrangements for the delightful holidays which were to follow would include Betty, who must accompany Lotty and her mother and brothers to the seaside.

On Thursday morning Lotty went away

Easter seemed very dull to Betty after her friend was gone; but the other girls were now quite friendly with her; and as Easter Monday turned out a lovely day, Miss St. Leger took all her pupils for a little picnic in the governess cart.

It was absolutely impossible for even the most careworn person to be long dull in Jasper's company. That eccentric donkey took care to keep all those with whom he came in contact on the alert. As on this occasion Miss St. Leger herself drove him, he was of course on his best behavior; but he made up for it when she decided to call on a neighbor as they were coming home, and gave the reins into Henny's hand.

Jasper knew the moment she was out of sight, and as the hedges were particularly appetizing just now, and full of the most succulent, tender, spring, green sort of things, he determined that no girl that ever breathed should keep him from his feast.

Accordingly he climbed and climbed, regardless of whips, regardless of threats, regardless of compliments. The girls coaxed and scolded and screamed with laughter. Mademoiselle was beside herself with mirth. Jasper was deaf and dumb to everything in all the world except the appetite of the *gourmet*, which now consumed him.

The girls were home quite an hour after their time, but Miss St. Leger was not inclined to scold,

and Betty felt that all the laughter had done her good.

In the middle of the following day Lotty returned. She said very little about her visit to anyone, but the anxious look had to a certain extent left her face. She returned to her lessons with a fierce will, which seemed likely to carry all before it

CHAPTER XIX.

LOTTY'S HELP.

NO time passes so quickly as that which is fully employed. It is impossible for moments to hang heavy on anyone's hands when a certain amount of work has to be got through in them.

Betty could scarcely believe her own senses when she found the dreary winter giving place to spring, and spring again to early summer. Mr. Falkoner was settled in Florida, and wrote regularly by every mail to his little daughter. As regular Betty replied to these letters. It was all like a wonderful, queer kind of dream to her. She used to rub her eyes and wonder if she would not wake some day and find herself back again in the dull parlor in the house at Bloomsbury, with her father coming in and out at odd intervals, and Hester scolding her and petting her by turns, and with nothing special to do from morning to night. In three months how great a change had taken place! How smoothly, how regularly, did the long bright days fly by! Almost immediately after Easter the weather became warm.

primroses and violets starred the hedgerows, the may began to come out, the horse-chestnut trees were covered with blossom, the fruit orchards were a sight to behold, the birds sang in the trees, and Betty lay awake at night listening to the notes of the nightingale and the sweet call of the cuckoo. She had never been in the country before, and the delight of all this growing life seemed to get into her at times and fill her with a sort of delirious joy.

Miss St. Leger was devoted to the country; the grounds round Melville Hall were considerable, and each girl had a garden of her own. As the weather got finer and finer, the dull walks were exchanged for gardening. A rage for gardening took possession of each girl, and Betty, the most ignorant of them all, took up this fascinating pastime with even more passionate zeal than her companions.

Henny was a very clever gardener, and her plot of ground was more artistically laid out, and promised to have a greater show of blossom, than any of the other girls. Betty's garden adjoined Henny's, with a very narrow wire fence dividing them.

One afternoon, when Betty raised her flushed face after sowing long rows of mignonette and sweet peas down a certain border, she encountered Henny's eyes fixed upon her.

"Have you done?" asked Henrietta in a somewhat sharp voice.

"Yes," said Betty, with a little sigh, "I have just about finished. I mean, I have used up all my seeds. I'd like to make the row of mignonette and sweet peas a little longer, though, Henny. I wish I had more seeds."

"Never mind, now," said Henny. "I want to talk to you for a bit. As it happens, I have some seeds over, in my two packets, and you are welcome to them."

"Oh, thank you!" said Betty, with a little sigh of delight. "May I sow them now, please?"

"You may, after we've had our talk."

"Well?" said Betty, standing up impatiently.

Henny looked her full in the face.

"It's pay day again," she said.

Betty colored crimson.

"I know," she replied. "I'm so glad. I want that money most dreadfully; I can't do without it another day."

"I'm afraid," said Henny in a slow voice, "that you will have to. Mademoiselle can't give it back to you to-day; it's impossible. She did not like to tell you this herself, so asked me to. It is absolutely impossible for her to pay you to-day."

"She told a lie, then," said Betty.

Henrietta laughed in a rather tantalizing manner.

"You're a little goose," she said. "Anyhow, you have no right to speak in that way of anyone."

"I have, when it's true," said Betty. "I'm not going to stand it. I—I know what I'll do."

Betty's face turned white; the quick, passionate nature which belonged to her was stung to the quick.

"There's Lotty!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Lotty, come here! Lotty, I want you!"

"You're not going to tell her?" said Henny, aghast.

"Tell her!" retorted Betty; "she has known it a long time. Lotty, I want you; come here at once!"

Lotty Raynham was walking through the garden, with her head as usual bent over a book. There was something, however, in Betty's sharp cry which brought her back from her dream-world; she shut up her book and ran quickly to the place where the little girls were standing.

"What in the world is the matter, Betty?" she exclaimed.

"It's this," said Betty, gasping out her words: "you said you'd help me, and I want you to. You know about my sovereign?"

"Oh, yes," said Lotty, nodding her head.

"It's pay day to-day," continued Betty.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, Betty," interrupted

Henny, "if you value your peace, if you don't want to make the most awful lot of misery, don't say any more!"

"I will tell Lotty!" exclaimed Betty.

Lotty glanced at Henny.

"Come here, Betty, and tell me everything," she said in a firm voice.

"It's pay day," said Betty, almost in tears, "and mademoiselle promised, she promised most faithfully that I should have my sovereign back to-day. She knew how I wanted it, and she promised faithfully. Now she has sent me a message through Henny to say that I can't have it."

"I didn't say it was a message," said Henny. "I—— Of course you must have it, if you're so horrid."

"Of course she must have it, and she's not horrid at all," said Lotty. "Come with me, this minute, Betty; I said I'd take up this thing, and I will. I don't think Miss St. Leger has paid anyone yet, so we're in plenty of time."

"You don't mean to say you're going to Miss St. Leger!" exclaimed Henny, almost beside nerself with terror.

"Indeed I do," said Lotty. "I'm going to no one else. Come along, Betty!"

"You'll rue it," said Henny, "you'll rue it. I hate you both! so does mademoiselle," she continued with passion; then she abruptly changed

her tone. "Oh, dear, oh, dear! Lotty, please be merciful. Don't tell Miss St. Leger, dear Lotty! Let's come to mademoiselle ourselves. She'll give it, of course, if Betty insists on it. Perhaps I told Betty more than I ought to when I said she couldn't have it; anyhow, she shall have it. Come and let us talk to mademoiselle, Lotty. There, I see her just coming into the garden. Oh, please, please don't tell Miss St. Leger; you'll ruin everything if you do."

"Let go my dress, Henny," said Lotty. "This sort of thing has gone on too long, and I'm positively determined that Miss St. Leger shall know. I don't like mademoiselle, and although I should not wish to injure her, it's just as well that Miss St. Leger's eyes should be opened a little. Come along, Betty; we've no time to waste."

Lotty wrenched her dress from Henny's feverish grasp, and walked down the garden path with her head in the air, accompanied by the trembling Betty.

Henny no longer pursued them with entreaties; she stood still, stunned and terrified, until they had passed out of sight.

Lotty found Miss St. Leger preparing to drive to see a friend in the governess cart. She paused for a moment as the two girls ran up to her breathless and excited.

"Now, what is it, my dears?" she exclaimed

"I'm in a great hurry, for I want to go to the Smiths' and back again before supper time. If you have anything special to say, can it wait?"

"No, I'm afraid it can't," said Lotty; "it's really important. But first, may I ask you a question, Miss St. Leger?"

"Certainly."

"This is pay day, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Have you paid anyone yet?"

"No, I have not; but what in the world does it matter to you whether I have or not, Lotty Raynham?"

"It does matter a great deal," said Lotty; "you may be sure I wouldn't interfere if it didn't matter. The facts are these: Mlle. Henri borrowed a sovereign from Betty, a little over a month ago; she promised to give it back to her last pay day, but begged to keep it until this. Betty most unwillingly agreed, for she wanted her sovereign badly. Now it is pay day again, and mademoiselle has sent a message to Betty to say she cannot pay her. I thought you ought to know, Miss St. Leger."

"Certainly," said Miss St. Leger; "I'm obliged to you, Lotty. May I ask you, Betty, why you had not the courage to come and tell me this yourself?"

"I did not want to, if I could help it," said Betty. "I would not have the courage to tell

you now," she continued, with a queer sort of half-appealing smile; "it's all Lotty's doing."

"Well, at any rate, you have the courage of truth," said Miss St. Leger. "I'll see to this; it shall be all right. Go back to your play, my dears, and say nothing about this interview."

"Oh, Henny knows, and for that matter, mademoiselle by this time," retorted Lotty. "We're likely to have a lively time in the garden, but I for one, don't care. Come, Betty."

Miss St. Leger got into the governess cart and drove quickly away. Her face looked grave and anxious. Lotty and Betty returned to the garden, which, however, they had quite to themselves, all the other girls having mysteriously vanished.

To mademoiselle's surprise and consternation, she did not receive her salary that evening, but the next morning after prayers Miss St. Leger motioned to the girls and the governess to remain.

"Will you have the kindness to come here, mademoiselle?" she said to the Frenchwoman. "I am sorry that, owing to circumstances, I was unable to pay you your month's salary last night. Here it is, I think, quite correct."

"I thank you, madame," said mademoiselle, with a profound French sweep of her head. She was turning to go, but Miss St. Leger detained her.

"One moment," she said. "I was told by Lotty Raynham last night that you borrowed a

pound from Betty Falkoner. Come here, Betty, and tell me if this is so."

"It is," said Betty, coming up and standing near Miss St. Leger. All eyes were fixed upon the two. Mademoiselle's face had assumed that greeny hue which it wore when her darkest and worst emotions were stirred; it was necessary, however, at all hazards to keep up an appearance of amiability for the time being.

"The *chère petite* speaks the truth," she said; "with her generous heart she did lend what I needed."

"You promised to pay her back to-day, did you not, mademoiselle?"

"She did," said Betty.

"It is true," said mademoiselle.

"Then kindly do so now in my presence, Mlle. Henri," said Miss St. Leger.

Mademoiselle looked at Betty; a greener tint than ever overspread her face. She dropped a sovereign into the girl's palm.

"I thank you, *petite*," she said; "I thank you much—— And also Mlle. Raynham; you remind me of my debt, I forget not what you have done. Have you finished, madame? Shall we proceed to our studies?"

"Girls, you may all go to the schoolroom," said Miss St. Leger. "I wish to have a little talk alone with you, Mlle. Henri."

CHAPTER XX.

CONSPIRATORS.

WONDER if she'll be in the garden," said Henny.

"Oh, yes," replied Elsie St. Leger; "I saw her gliding by about ten minutes ago. I left the window on the latch in the cloak room; we can easily lift it without anyone hearing us, and step out. I'm afraid," said Elsie. "Suppose, oh, suppose Aunt Agatha finds out what we're going to do!"

"We won't suppose, you little goose. Your precious auntie is stowed away safely in her study for the next couple of hours. She bid us good-night five minutes ago, tucked up in our respective beds; she is scarcely likely, therefore, to trouble herself about us again before to-morrow morning. Now come, Elsie, take my hand. There's only a bad two minutes while we're flying downstairs, then we scramble through the open window, and are free, free to enjoy ourselves, and to—to help poor, dear mademoiselle."

"Poor darling!" exclaimed Elsie with a gasp.

"If there's a creature in this wide world whom I sympathize with, it's with her; and if there are two human beings whom I cordially hate, it's that detestable Betty, and that, if possible, still more detestable Lotty."

"It's their slyness and depth which gets over me," said Henny; "there's no being up to that sort of people. But do come along, Elsie; we can talk as long as we like as soon as we're in the open air."

Elsie, who was of a more timorous nature than Henny, slipped her rather trembling little hand into her companion's. The girls, who shared one bedroom, softly opened the door and stepped out on the landing. The bedroom door was carefully shut behind them, and then, in their stockinged feet, they crept carefully downstairs. In spite of all their efforts, a board creaked dismally here and there as they made their progress. They stood still after each of these portentous sounds to listen anxiously, but, as no one moved in the house, they gathered fresh courage and went on. They presently reached the little cloakroom. Henny carefully lifted the window, and they both stepped out into the silent night. The window was closed as carefully as it was raised, and the girls stood, shaking with mirth and fear, with excitement, and yet with a certain sinking of heart, on the gravel outside. Here they stooped

down to slip on their walking shoes, and a moment later were speeding across the moonlit grass toward the large kitchen garden, where their own little gardens also stood.

The kitchen garden was walled all round, and was entered by a postern door, which was generally kept locked at night. On this occasion, however, it was on the latch, and Henny and Elsie having entered, ran quickly down a straight broad path to a summerhouse which was situated at the farther end of the garden. Here they found mademoiselle awaiting them, and not only mademoiselle, but a stout, coarse-looking Frenchwoman, who addressed the governess as Sophie, and was called on her part Ernestine.

"Ah, here come *les petites!*" exclaimed Mlle. Henri. She made room for the little girls to seat themselves near her; they squeezed in close to her side, both of them panting from their run, and from excitement generally. Mademoiselle stooped down and whispered in Henny's ear:

"You have, I know, done your best for me, *ma chère petite Henriette*," she said.

"Not much," said Henrietta in a doleful voice. "We managed to scrape five shillings between us: here it is. Marion did not want to give her last sixpence, but when I pleaded, she did not refuse."

"It is vere little," said mademoiselle, "but better than nothing at all. Take it, Ernestine,

and go away *vite;* take it to the *pauvre* André, and tell him I can do nothing more. Go, Ernestine, quick!"

The fat Frenchwoman grasped the money, shut it up in her purse with a little snap, and turning to mademoiselle, gave her a fervent embrace. She then kissed both the little girls with equal fervor. They disliked the ceremony immensely, and were glad when they saw her vanishing out of sight down the garden path.

"Now then, my little ones," said mademoiselle, "we have our brief moment of this so great pleasure—the pleasure which is, in my mind, the elixir of this dull life. Here is the lemonade, and here is the gingerbread. Ernestine, *pauvre chèrie*, could only bring a vere little to-night, because she had not money to buy; but even two gingerbread cakes and one bottle of the sparkling lemonade will be better than nothing. Say you not so, *mes enfants?*"

Now Henny and Elsie had partaken of an excellent and substantial supper not an hour ago, and had in consequence no appetite whatever; still the charms of drinking bad lemonade and eating stale gingerbread out of doors, and in a very secretive, forbidden sort of way, were far too great to be resisted. For the sake of these nocturnal feasts, and out of the mere spirit of pure naughtiness, they had slipped out many times to

join mademoiselle and her friends in the garden. As a rule, they had brought a little money with them to give to the said friends, and, as a rule, in return were treated to a feast of an essentially light and delicate description. Never, however, had it been quite so meager as to-night, and when mademoiselle popped the cork and poured the lemonade into a little tin mug for each of them to sip in turn, the fact of Mme. Ernestine's great poverty seemed brought more plainly before their eyes than ever. Mme. Ernestine was M. André's wife, and most piteous were the stories which, from time to time, she poured in the little girls' ears about him.

According to Mme. Ernestine, there never before had been sent to earth so great and noble a hero as M. André. His talents, however, were not appreciated, his goodness was not perceived, his fascinations were not acknowledged, and in consequence, this brilliant creature was left by a censorious world to feel the pangs of absolute hunger. According to Mme. Ernestine and to Mlle. Henri, it was the manifest duty of the little girls who lived at Melville Hall to support M. André. She had talked of this so often, and with so much eloquence, that she had really won over to her side all the children except Betty and Lotty. A great resolve had arisen in mademoiselle's breast. Henny should, if possible, win

Mrs. Rivers' great prize, and the larger part of the money should go to M. André. It was to talk over this subject she had desired the two girls to meet her in the summerhouse that evening.

"Ah, I got great fright," she said, as she hastily drank the largest portion of the lemonade. "I underwent great and severe shock when madame asked me to follow her into her private room this morning, but I think I have thrown dust into the eyes of the dear good madame; so that wicked Betty and that most terrible Mlle. Lotty will not have won the victory."

"How glad I am!" said Henny.

"And so am I," said Elsie.

"But what did you specially want us to come out here to-night for?" asked Henny, looking at the French governess steadily.

The full moon was shining into the summer-house, so the faces of the three conspirators, as they might well have called themselves, were distinctly visible.

Mademoiselle laid one of her thin hands on Henny's shoulder.

"*Chérie*," she exclaimed with fervor, "you grow *chic*, more *mignonne*, more ravishingly beautiful each day and hour. Those eyes—ah, their brilliance; those lips—do they not resemble the petal of a rose? The color that mantles those cheeks—

is it not also obtained from the bloom of that queen of flowers? And then the white of your brow, and the gold of your hair. Henriette, I nevere saw a face more *distinguée* than yours!"

Henny in her heart of hearts was not quite goose enough to swallow all this wholesale flattery, but a good deal of it did go down, and she certainly thought mademoiselle a most agreeable woman.

Elsie, however, who was in reality almost as pretty a girl as Henny, did not quite care for such one-sided compliments.

"Henny's face is all very well," she exclaimed; "but, after all, if you come to eyes, much as I dislike her, I don't think any of us can touch Betty in that respect. It was only this morning that Bella remarked that Betty's eyes were quite Burne-Jones-y."

"I hear not before of that style of eyes," responded mademoiselle, who knew nothing of art or artists. "Interrupt me not, I beg of you, Elsie; I have to say my little say. I like not the eyes of Betty: to me they are not beautiful. You and Henny share the beauty of the school, but Henny has features the most *absolument* perfect; therefore, on the score of beauty, Henny will undoubted win the prize."

"Do you think so, really?" exclaimed Henriette. "I should like it of all things!"

"There is no doubt," said mademoiselle.

"But the prize," continued Elsie, "is for inside beauty as well as outside; it is for beauty of character as well as beauty of face. Should you say, honestly now, that Henny's character is as absolutely perfect as you call her face?"

At these words mademoiselle rose to her feet, and threw up one arm in a theatrical manner.

"I do," she exclaimed with fervor. "Where is there to be found one more generous, or one more faithful? Where is there a heart that beats more royal true than that of this *mignonne* Henriette."

"Really, I don't know how to hide my blushes," said Henny, in some confusion.

"Listen, *petites*, both of you," said mademoiselle, speaking now with great earnestness. "Only one of you can win this most extraordinaire prize. Give it up, then, Elsie, with a good grace, and let Henny be the conquering heroine of this great occasion."

"But granted that I have beauty," said Henrietta, "I certainly have not got talent to cope with Lotty's. How can my theme on the Perfect Girl touch hers?"

"By conspiracy that can be managed," said mademoiselle. "I know a way. Henny and Elsie, I have set my mind on avenging myself on that girl Lotty Raynham. She have set her heart

on that leetle prize, but you shall have it, not she; you leave it to me, only when I tell you to act, act: when I give you the word, be prepared to do implicit what I say. Trust in me, Henny, and when you win the sovereigns in the beautiful purse, and are the honored and admired of all, then remember my poor brother André and also this dear, good Elsie, who will, I know, aid you from now until the break-up in this matter most *difficile*."

Elsie sat silent.

"I don't know that I want to do anything really wrong," she said, after a pause. "I like you very much, mademoiselle, but you frighten me sometimes, you know."

"Is it wrong to relieve the oppressed and the starving?" asked mademoiselle with passion.

"No, oh, no! but to do anything to hurt poor Lotty."

"Did I say that I would do anything to hurt Mlle. Lotty?"

'No——" Elsie stopped in confusion.

"Then imagine no evil, *chérie*."

All this time Henny was silent. She did not like mademoiselle's words about Lotty, but she had not courage to express her real sentiments, and when mademoiselle put one arm round her, and drew her to her side, and whispered soft, dangerous flatteries in her ears, the little girl gave

herself up to the spell which this dangerous woman was casting about her. Henny had never been quite straightforward, nor quite truthful; she would fall a ready victim, therefore, and would, in short, walk blindly into the trap which mademoiselle was laying at her feet.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOTTY'S LOST KEY.

HE next few weeks passed tranquilly by. Mademoiselle was the soul of amiability. She had apparently lost all her anxieties, and also all her little underhand ways. She ceased to invite Henny and Elsie to creep out of the house at night to meet her friends, and to drink the lemonade and eat the gingerbread which they brought with them. She was attentive to the girls' studies, and was once again Miss St. Leger's right hand. There were few people in the school who could make themselves more necessary to others than this clever Mlle. Henri. When she chose to set her wits to work there were few who could withstand her. Miss St. Leger, who, with all her *brusquerie* and downright common-sense, could never long harbor suspicions of anyone, quickly restored the governess to her favor. She had been very angry with her when she heard that she had borrowed a sovereign from Betty, and had spoken to her severely on the subject, but mademoiselle had contrived to show such penitence on this occasion, and had

spoken with such humility and such sorrow on account of her own behavior, that Miss St. Leger said she was willing to give her another trial. Had she known of mademoiselle's conduct with regard to the hippodrome, she would, of course, have dismissed her at once, and all that followed would never have occurred.

The weeks passed by in apparent calm. The weather was lovely, and the girls spent every moment of their spare time in the open air. Miss St. Leger furnished the summerhouse with tables and chairs for their benefit, and they often brought out their preparation to do there, and the themes which were to be sent in for the important prize were some of them written there. Betty was now in high favor with everyone. She was so gentle, so unassuming, so sympathetic, too, and tactful, that it was extremely difficult for any of the girls to quarrel with her. No one in the school was more obliging than Betty; her own wishes and desires were seldom put first. She was, perhaps, at this time of her life, rather wanting in ambition; but certainly few of her thoughts were self-centered. The strongest desire of her heart at present was that Lotty should get the prize, and with this object in view she worked morning, noon, and night.

It was Betty, of her own accord, who mended all Lotty's clothes, who sewed buttons on her

gloves and boots, who darned her stockings, who put clean frills round the necks of her dresses and jackets. It was Betty who, with wonderful taste, retrimmed Lotty's best Sunday hat, and at night it was Betty who brushed Lotty's long black hair until it shone and glowed, and each hair seemed to live and almost sparkle under her care. Miss St. Leger took in a journal which devoted some of its pages to the fashions, and Betty studied it anxiously week by week, with a view to getting Lotty's clothes cut in the most fashionable way, and Lotty's handsome head of hair dressed in the most becoming style. Night after night Betty drilled Lotty, who paced up and down her bedroom with measured and martial strides, who poked her head now in so far that her chin seemed to bury itself in her neck, who opened and shut a door, and entered a room as if she were a soldier in a cavalry regiment, and not a gentle, young girl in her early teens.

"O Betty, it's no use," said Lotty one evening after Betty had been ordering, and commanding, and expostulating, and entreating, for half an hour. "I *can't* be graceful, I'm too big; there's too much of me; I must stride; I can't be girlish, and I can't be soft. I'm sure I was meant to be a boy, not a girl. I know I'd have made a splendid boy. O Betty, what is to be done? My theme is nearly written, and I do think it's first

class. I should like immensely to read it to you, but, you see, it's against the rules; and you have taken such pains with my dress, you dear little Bettina, that I know I shall be poked up and stiffened beautifully when the fateful day arrives, and I'm sure if any poor mortal has persevered with buttermilk and other washes for removing sunburn and freckles, I have, but I really think my face is as tanned and freckled as ever, and do what we both will with my hair, it won't cloud out in the correct style round my forehead; it's too heavy, it's like the rest of me."

"I'm going to buy curling-tongs," said Betty, "and on the day of the prize giving I'll curl it, and then you'll see how splendid it 'll look. Try not to be discouraged, Lotty, for I'm sure you'll look first-rate when the day comes."

Lotty sank down into a chair and let her hands drop into her lap.

"I know Henny is trying like anything," she said, "and she certainly does get prettier every day. Whatever you do with me, Betty, how can I compete with her?"

"You're not as pretty, certainly," said Betty, in a very honest, sad voice.

"Well, there, you admit it. Now, what's to be done? Betty, if I don't get that prize I shall—I think I shall die. I think my heart will break. Oh, you don't know what it means to me, and I

promised mother when I went to see her at Easter. She was fagged out, she was nearly quite done, but I talked to her about the prize, and I said I was certain to get it, and she cheered up wonderfully. We arranged where we were to go; we planned the whole thing. Mother knew just the little cottage, and such a dear, little, old landlady, and the sea about two hundred yards away; and you and I were to have the attic bedroom together."

"O Lotty!" gasped Betty.

"Why, of course, you don't suppose I'd have my fun without you. I told mother all about you, and she's just longing to know you, and to mother you, and to make you happy. Oh, everything is arranged, and mother—mother may die if I don't succeed. Think what two months at the sea will do for her, Betty, and think of my being the one to give her the pleasure. Oh, dear, what am I to do? It's cruel of Henny to be so good-looking."

"She can't help her looks," said Betty; "but looks aren't all. Do you suppose her theme will touch yours? Do you suppose her mind and character will touch yours? Do you think the soul that looks out of her face is anything at all like the soul that looks out of yours? Why, she's empty beside you, Lotty; she's poor beside you. If Mrs. Rivers knows anything at all about what

a girl ought to be, she can't choose Henny when she sees you."

"Come here, Betty," said Lotty.

Betty went straight up to her friend.

"Put your arms round me and kiss me, Bettina," said Lotty.

Betty did so.

She was turning to leave when Lotty suddenly gripped her in a tight kind of fierce embrace.

"I'm so fond of you," she said, "I'm so fond of you, though I can't talk about it. You have heartened me up once more. Now, I'm going down to the preparation room, for I mean to finish my theme to-night."

At this hour, while the weather was so fine, Lotty often had the preparation room to herself. It was empty to-night. She gave a sigh of pleasure when she found it so, and was soon absorbed in her poetry-making. Forgotten now were all Lotty's woes; her fears slumbered, her anxieties slipped away from her. She was writing a poem in a strange sort of irregular meter half her own, and which certainly belonged to no recognized school, but the queer rhymes, even the discordances, suited the tumultuous and youthful thoughts, and her ideas were quite fascinating enough to fill her whole mind. Lotty had her own conception with regard to the Perfect Girl, and she was writing about her now. This girl,

the girl of Lotty's dreams, was not the least like herself. She was gentle where Lotty was fierce, graceful where Lotty was *gauche*, and full of that sort of spiritual nature which adds more beauty than anything else to the human face. Lotty wrote with glowing eyes and flushed cheeks. She meant to finish her theme to-night, and she saw that it was coming to a rapid and bold conclusion. There was a sort of peroration at the end, which was wonderfully good for so young a girl. Lotty's constant reading of Shakspere and Milton, of Spenser's "Faërie Queene" and Pope's Iliad, gave her plenty of images, and enriched her mind for her present work. It would be impossible for anyone to read Lotty's poem of the Perfect Girl without knowing how well read and well informed she was herself.

At last the work, which she considered so great a work, was over. Her heart had gone into it, her intellect had wrestled over it. Now it was finished, the best thing she had ever done.

"It is good," said Lotty, with a sparkle in her eyes. "Yes, though I have written it myself, I know it is good, very good. But what a motive I have had—mother, mother, mother: and what a model in that dearest of little Betties. I wonder if anyone will recognize her when her portrait is read aloud."

The supper gong suddenly sounded through

the house. Lotty placed her theme in a square envelope, addressed it as she was told to Miss St. Leger, and left it in her desk all ready to be delivered to her mistress on the 15th of June. To-morrow would be the day, and Lotty's heart gave a bound as she said to herself: "I must have patience, I shall not have long to wait."

It was one of Miss St. Leger's rules that the girls should have locks to their desks, and that they should be very careful never to lose the keys.

Lotty put her hand into her pocket now to feel for her key; it was not there. At the same moment she remembered that she had found the desk open when she had gone to it about two hours ago.

"How careless of me!" she thought. "I suppose the key is in the pocket of my other dress. I must not forget to find it after supper, in order lock up my treasure, not that anything can hurt it now."

The steps of the other girls were heard in the passage, and Lotty left the preparation room to join them.

Supper was followed by prayers, and soon afterward the girls went to their rooms.

An hour or two later, when all the rest of the house was in bed and asleep, Mlle. Henri slipped downstairs. She entered the preparation room,

opened Lotty's unlocked desk, and took out the theme, which was placed ready to be delivered in its neatly directed envelope. Treading softly in her stockinged feet, she returned to her own room. Two candles burned on her mantelpiece, and the little table with writing materials stood just where the light could fall on it. Another large envelope, also addressed to Miss St. Leger, was on the table. Mlle. Henri fetched a jug of boiling water, and holding the envelopes over the steam, unfastened them. One envelope contained Lotty's theme, the other Henny's. Mademoiselle took the themes out of their envelopes, glanced with satisfaction at the handwritings, which happened to be very much the same in character and general expression. She then placed Henny's theme in Lotty's envelope, and Lotty's in Henny's, and once more retraced her steps through the silent house. The envelopes containing the finished themes were put back in the two girls' desks. To all appearance they were exactly as they were before. Mademoiselle finally finished her mysterious operations by dropping Lotty's lost key on the floor at the foot of her desk. She then returned to her room, got into bed, and went peacefully to sleep.

Her conscience did not prick her, nor did bad dreams trouble her. What she had done was done in the cause of her adorable André, and now

she slept happily, for she felt sure that success would attend her efforts. By one clever stroke she had managed to combine Henny's beauty with Lotty's genius. Surely the result must be those fifteen sovereigns, which she so deeply coveted for poor André's use.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHITE OR GREEN SASHES.

THE next morning Betty woke at an early hour. Her theme was also finished, but she had not yet put it into an envelope nor directed it. The thoughts which she had tried to express in her little composition had mingled more or less in her dreams. Her night had been somewhat restless in consequence, and now she lay awake, unable to sleep any more, quite an hour before the ordinary time of getting up. Betty was not happy in composition. Her thoughts flowed slowly and with difficulty. She had not learned the art yet of clothing them in language. They were there, crowding in and out of that thoughtful, compact, little head of hers, but as yet the difficulty of expressing them was very great. Betty's theme of the Perfect Girl was, of course, expressed in prose. She had her ideas, as most girls have, on this all-important subject. Her ideas were very crude, and pointed more or less in her own mind to a sort of idealized Lotty; but she felt the difficulties which most beginners know of expressing on paper what she really thought. To see Lotty in her mind's eye,

and to paint Lotty in words on a blank sheet of paper, were two very different matters. Betty had no wish to gain the prize, but she did wish to do her subject justice, and she felt thoroughly dissatisfied with the weak performance which would be read aloud to the assembled school on the day of the break-up.

All the themes were to be handed to Miss St. Leger that evening, but it occurred to Betty now, as she lay awake, that she might perhaps correct her theme in a few particulars before she got up, and re-write it during her play time. She accordingly stole softly out of bed, and slipped on her dressing-gown, ran down through the silent house.

The servants were not yet up, but the full light of the summer's day was flooding everything. Betty opened the schoolroom door, went through it into the little preparation room beyond, and opening her desk, took out her theme. She was about to leave the room when her eyes were attracted by the sun shining on a small object. She turned and stooped to pick it up. It was the key of Lotty's desk. Lying close to the key was an envelope addressed to Mlle. Henri. Betty picked both envelope and key up, felt Lotty's desk to see if it were open, found that it was, and locked it. She then returned to her own room. On her way upstairs she was startled by meeting mademoiselle coming down fully dressed

"Ah, what an early bird!" exclaimed the governess. But then she stopped, her color perceptibly changed, and she held out her hand suddenly. "What is that?" she said, clutching the envelope which Betty held in her hand.

"I found it on the floor in the preparation room, close to Lotty's desk," explained Betty.

"Ah, it is empty; it is of no consequence," said mademoiselle. She recovered her manner at once after her momentary start. "I not sleep vere well," she said, "so I dress and go out for walk in lovely fresh air. What are you doing at this hour, leetle Betty!"

"I went down to the preparation room to fetch my theme," explained Betty. "I found the key of Lotty's desk on the floor, and also this envelope of yours, mademoiselle."

"Ah, that means nothing at all," said mademoiselle. "That envelope fell from my pocket, no doubt, last night. As to the key, Mlle. Lotty is vere careless, but I not complain to madame. No, I say noting, if I were you, leetle Betty."

"Certainly not," said Betty, her eyes flashing. She turned toward her bedroom as she spoke.

"Don't work too hard, *chérie*," called out mademoiselle as she ran downstairs. "Ah, those themes; that prize *magnifique!* You will wear yourselves out, all of you, my vere dear

pupils; and what disappointment, except for the one who wins."

Betty made no response. She entered her own room, got back into bed, and sitting up, with her dressing-gown flung over her shoulders, began to read her own unhappy composition, first in detachments, then as a whole, her brow puckering anxiously as she tried, and tried in vain, to make it more like the idea which filled her mind.

As Lotty was dressing that morning Betty suddenly told her where she had found the key of her school-desk.

"I locked your desk and here's the key now," said the little girl in conclusion.

"Oh, that accounts for it," said Lotty. "I could not find the key last night. I was sure it was in my pocket as usual, but no. I suppose I must have pulled it out with my pocket-handkerchief, and so it fell to the floor without my noticing it. How lucky for me that you were the one to find it, Bettina, for I can't afford to get even one bad mark just now, when the time for the prize giving is drawing so near."

"Lotty," said Betty suddenly, "I wish you wouldn't think so dreadfully much about that prize."

Lotty laughed.

"As well ask me not to breathe, Bettina," she said.

"It seems quite awful to me," continued Betty, "for, after all, you may be disappointed. Do you know, it is making you worn and pale. Your face isn't half as round as it was when first I came; and, oh, Lotty, what is the matter?"

"Good gracious, you don't say that my face has got long, do you? Here, give me a handglass, and let me examine it at the window. Strictly speaking, now, Betty, which is the most admired —the long face or the round?"

"I think," said Betty anxiously, "but I'm not quite sure, that the oval is thought the perfect face."

"Oh, like that distractingly, horridly pretty Henny! Well, my face was always round. Full moon the boys used to call me. Full moon and saucer face. I am certain you are right, Betty: I'm getting thinner. I shall eat less during the next fortnight. I shall encourage hunger, and I shall stay indoors as much as possible. I shouldn't be a bit surprised that, if I could manage to turn pale and get really thin, I should have a very interesting sort of expression—a sort of pathos, you know, which might win the old lady. With all her beauty, I never, never saw Henny look pathetic."

"O Lotty," exclaimed Betty, "how earnestly I do hope you'll succeed!

There was something in Betty's voice which made Lotty look at her.

"I say," she exclaimed suddenly, "I have just discovered something. O Bettina, you can't, you can't be so cruel!"

"As what?" said Betty in alarm.

"As to grow pretty and cut me out of the thing. If it were a matter of mere beauty, I know who I'd give the prize to. Bettina, dear, on the day of the prize giving don't for the life of you look pathetic. When you look at anyone with those pathetic eyes you bowl them over at once. Can't you manage just to get up a sneer for the occasion out of love to me, Betty?"

Betty laughed.

"There's no fear of my winning the prize," she said. "I shan't put myself forward in any way. My theme is simply odious, and you know I'm not really pretty. I'd quite hate to be pretty if it injured you. Don't let us talk about it any more, Lotty. I shan't win the prize. But tell me, for I want to know, have you quite finished your theme?"

"Yes," replied Lotty, "I finished it last night. I think it very good indeed. I hope it won't be too deep for Mrs. Rivers, poor old dear. That's the only thing that makes me nervous. I'd give all the world to read it to you, Betty, but, of course, that's against the rules."

Here the prayer bell rang, and the girls had to hurry downstairs.

The rest of the day passed without any special adventure, and Betty did not give another thought to the fact of mademoiselle's envelope and Lotty's key being found close together on the floor in the preparation room. She was to remember the circumstance acutely enough by and by, but in the full rush of present interests it was completely forgotten.

In the evening the girls all brought their neatly sealed-up themes to Miss St. Leger, who took them without a word, and deposited them in her davenport. As they were leaving her room she called after her pupils to make an observation.

"I heard to-day from Mrs. Rivers," she said, "and she wishes you all to wear a certain dress on the day of the break-up. She herself will pay the expense of this special costume. She would like each of you to be in white, with green sashes. I have asked a dressmaker to call here to-morrow morning to fit you. She will arrive at a little after eleven o'clock, so we will dispense with our usual walk at that hour. The dresses will be of white muslin, as simple as possible."

Miss St. Leger turned away as she spoke, and the girls left the room. The piece of news which they had just received was pleasing to some of them, but not to all. The three St. Leger girls,

who knew that their aunt would go to no expense to make them beautiful for the occasion, were very glad to hear of new dresses of any sort, but Henny, whose mother was sending her a particularly graceful and fashionable dress for the occasion, was white with anger, and Lotty also, she could scarcely tell why, felt indignant.

"I hate myself in white," she exclaimed to Betty. "I'm too gawky and too yellow for white, and then green sashes! Oh, dear, oh, dear, why *must* the sashes be green? It seems to destroy my very last chance. How can a girl with my complexion wear green? Now, of course, green will suit that little flower face of Henny's to perfection."

Henny, meanwhile, was pouring out her rage to her chosen companions.

"It was to be white crépon over white silk," she exclaimed, "and made by Mme. Bonree. If you don't know her style, you ought to know it, that's all I say." Here she gave a fierce glance at the adoring face of Elsie. "And the dress was to be looped up here and there with pink. Mother said it would be sweet—just the thing for me. Who wants to wear horrid, old-maidish, white muslin, and cut by a local dressmaker? I declare I don't think I'll compete at all: it's too bad—it's quite too bad!"

"Well," said Marian, a little stoutly, "it seems

to me fair enough. It makes all our chances more even. As it is, Henny, you are better off as regards looks than any of us, and if you have a beautiful dress as well, and if we show too much elbow and too much leg, and our skirts are too skimpy and too old-fashioned, as, of course, I know mine will be if Aunt Agatha has the dressing of me, for she will insist on my wearing the buff muslin—and I look odious in buff—which she got for me two summers ago, what chance can I have?"

Henny was about to reply when the parlor-maid, Alice, suddenly appeared on the scene, bearing a large cardboard box which had just arrived by parcel post.

"For you, Miss Gaunt," she said; "it has just come."

Henny gave a little scream of rapture.

"It's my dress!" she exclaimed, "my darling darling, beautiful dress! Oh, how exciting, and how, how irritating! Thank you, Alice; you can lay the parcel down there; you needn't stay, Alice; I can remove the paper and string. Now, girls," continued Henny, laying her treasure on the floor and kneeling down by it, "don't you all want to get a peep?"

"I should think so!" exclaimed Elsie. "It's quite splendid that the dress has come, for it may give us all an idea for our book muslins. What

frets me, as a rule, about local dressmakers, is the way they cut the shoulders, and the sleeves never seem to get the fullness in the right place, and the elbows are never where the elbows ought to be; but if we measure and calculate by your dress, Henny, we may succeed in making ourselves look really stylish."

"I don't at all know that I want you to measure and calculate," exclaimed Henny with a frown.

She looked disturbed for a minute, but soon the excitement of opening her parcel and peeping at her delightful dress was too much for her. Her good-humor returned, dimpling smiles came and went round her pretty lips, and the wild rose bloom in her cheeks grew brighter.

Lotty and Betty joined the group of girls who stood round the box, and presently the door of the playroom was opened, and mademoiselle came in.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "I thought I should find my vere dear pupils here. What is the excitement, Henriette? Ah, I guess I know. Ah, what a ravishing moment!"

She stood still with the other girls while Henny unfolded the brown paper and lifted the lid of the box. There were folds of tissue paper underneath, and then below the paper came the shimmer of silk, and the soft rose bloom of delicate pink ribbons, and the etherial texture of the very finest white crépon.

"Oh, the darling beauty!" exclaimed Elsie. "Lift it out, Henny, lift it out; let us gloat over it: now, then, let me help you."

"No, no, I can do it myself," said Henny.

She took the dress out of the box with shaking fingers, and then stood up to display it in all its magnificence before the eager, excited, half-envious girls. It was the sort of a dress that might make any little girl's mouth water, being as simple as it was perfectly elegant and good in texture and design. Under the dress, in the same box, were a pair of white silk stockings, and the prettiest white satin shoes, with high heels and pointed toes, that could possibly be imagined. There was also a pocket-handkerchief, with a deep lace border, and even a little silver flower-holder, and, finally, a long row of exquisite pink Venetian beads, to twist round Henny's white throat.

"I nevere, even in Paris, saw anything more *absolument* perfect!" exclaimed mademoiselle. "Henny, my little one, you shall come upstairs and put on your robe, and then come down and show yourself to the others. *Ma belle*, no one will be able to touch you in such a robe as that."

"I'll come up and help you to dress, Henny," exclaimed Elsie.

"*Vite, vite!*" cried mademoiselle, seizing the

box as she spoke. "Let us waste not a moment in seeing this *la belle petite* in all her charms."

Henny, who was quite carried away by the beauty of the dress, by mademoiselle's flatteries, and by the half-envious, half-admiring glances of her companions, was more than willing to try on her finery. She left the room, accompanied by Elsie and mademoiselle. Bella and the two St. Legers began to whisper in somewhat discontented tones to one another, and Lotty, whose face had grown suddenly as white as death, turned to Betty with a sort of gasp.

"Come out," she said, clutching Betty's hand with a fierce grip. She dragged the little girl out into the garden. "Didn't I tell you it was no use?" she said. "I had no chance before; no chance whatever against her face; and now, her face and that frock combined! O Betty, it is hard! I feel as if my heart would break."

"Nonsense!" said Betty stoutly. "I know the frock is very pretty; I never saw anything quite so pretty before. But what has that to do with it? Mrs. Rivers is not going to give the prize to a frock; if she did, it wouldn't be worth winning: anyone who is rich can get a pretty frock."

"It's useless to despise clothes," said Lotty. "I never do. I have seen girls who were almost plain look awfully nice when they were well

dressed, and I've seen very pretty girls look almost ugly in dowdy clothes."

"But Lotty, I thought you didn't care a bit about clothes."

"No more I do. I mean in reality. I don't care in reality one scrap whether I'm good-looking or not. I don't care in reality one scrap whether I'm *gauche* or whether I'm graceful, but when so much hangs on it, I do care. I care just awfully. O Betty, Betty, I must honestly say that I think Miss Rivers is doing us all a fearful lot of harm with her extraordinary prize."

"Well, cheer up," said Betty; "what you thought such a misfortune a few minutes ago may not turn out so bad in the end. However pretty that new dress may be, Henny won't be able to wear it. She'll have to appear in her simple book muslin and her green ribbons, like the rest of us."

"I'm sure she'll wear that dress," said Lotty, "she'll contrive it somehow. You'll see when the time comes. Oh, I do feel restless and miserable; that new dress of Henny's makes me downright miserable."

The two girls were walking up and down not far from the house. At this moment Lotty turned suddenly, and saw Miss St. Leger coming to meet them. At the same moment, to her surprise, Betty darted from her side, and rushed up to her mistress.

"Please let me say something," she exclaimed, in her breathless sort of way.

"Certainly, Betty," replied Miss St. Leger, "if you will be quick, and promise not to waste my valuable time."

"Yes, I'll be quick," said Betty. "Perhaps you won't grant my request, perhaps you will."

"Speak, my dear. I really have no moments to waste on any preambles."

"Well, it's just this," exclaimed Betty boldly. "I want you to write to Mrs. Rivers; I want you to write to her to-night."

"My dear Betty Falkoner, what in the world do you mean?"

"Just what I say," replied Betty in a steady voice. "Mrs. Rivers wants us all to be in white and green on the day of the break-up. Now, that isn't fair, and I want you to tell her so."

Betty's remarks were so audacious that Miss St. Leger felt herself almost speechless as she looked at her.

"It isn't fair," continued the little girl, "because green will be extremely becoming to some of us, to Henny and Elsie, and perhaps to me, but it won't suit Lotty a bit, and it won't suit Marian nor Bella; therefore I say that it isn't fair to expect us all to wear green. I want you to ask her to let us have white sashes to match our dresses; then there'll be an equal chance for us all as far

as dress is concerned. Will you write, Miss St. Leger? Will you, oh, please, will you? It is so dreadfully important!"

Miss St. Leger looked from Betty's glowing face to Lotty's, which was pale, drawn, and almost worn at that moment.

"Lotty," she exclaimed suddenly, "you are thinking too much of this prize! My dear child, I beseech of you to moderate your expectations. I know Betty is pleading like this on your account."

"And why shouldn't she?" replied Lotty, in a fierce sort of stifled voice. "White doesn't suit me, but green simply kills my chance. Why should my chance be killed?"

Miss St. Leger remained thoughtful for a moment.

"I'm almost sorry this prize has been offered," she said. "It stirs up bad and excited feeling. But I admit," she added after a pause, "that there is justice in Betty's remarks, and I will write to Mrs. Rivers."

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE CHASTE MOONLIGHT.

MEANWHILE Henny, in great excitement, and assisted by mademoiselle, was putting away her beautiful dress. She had tried it on, and had shown herself to all the schoolfellows, with the exception of Betty and Lotty. She had submitted to be turned round, to be pulled to right and pulled to left; to be looked at front view, profile view, back view; to have the cut of the skirt criticised, and the puff of the fascinating sleeve—in short, to have her dress taken, metaphorically, to pieces, and pronounced in the end "simply perfect!" Now the grand and fascinating exhibition was at an end, and she was putting her finery away.

"It's too bad!" she exclaimed, raising her flushed, little face, and looking at mademoiselle. "It's too dreadfully, horribly bad! Mother did go to such an expense for this dress, and now I can't wear it; it is too trying!"

"It need not be," exclaimed mademoiselle. "I, for my part, am glad the ravishing robe has come; the style, so simple, so beautiful, shall be copied

by my own hands, *petite*, in that book muslin which you will wear; there will be the little puff, so; and the little loop up, so; and the arrangement of the belt, so, in that muslin, which in the hands of the dressmaker will be dull, ah, dull, ugly, *gauche* on the other *chéries*, but on you, Henny, even the book muslin will look *ravissant*. Leave it to me, *mignonne*, leave it to me."

"Can you really manage it?" asked Henny, with a little gleam of hope.

"*Certainement*," replied mademoiselle. "I also propose to slip the muslin over this silk petticoat, which will make, ah, such a difference in the effect; and you shall wear your white shoes, and your white stockings, and your white silk gloves. Nevere fear, Henrietta, you will be beautiful when the time comes."

Henny stood quite still while mademoiselle was speaking.

"You are wonderful," she exclaimed; "you are clever; you are good! But I wonder," she continued, "why you want me to get the prize so much?"

"I make no secret, *mignonne*. I know your generous heart: you will bestow some of the money on André—the poor, the noble, the unappreciated!"

Henny was silent. By this time she was greedily desirous to get the prize. She was a

rich girl, but even to rich girls fifteen golden sovereigns can be full of attraction, and she did not at all want to hand over the whole of her treasure to mademoiselle. Mademoiselle, whose light brown eyes could read right down into Henny's frivolous little soul, felt that the time had come to tighten the chain which she was weaving round her victim.

"Can you come into my room to-night for a vere little time, *petite?*" she said.

"If you really wish it," said Henny; "but can you not speak now?"

"There is not time sufficient, we shall be called to prayers in a moment."

"But after prayers we are expected to go to bed."

"That is so, but I send for you to my bedroom to speak about your lessons, that excuse will do if you are questioned. Come to me to-night, Henny, I have something of grave importance to say. I shall be in my room and waiting for you at one quarter to ten hours."

Henny promised to obey, and the prayer-gong sounded. The two went downstairs.

Henny and Elsie slept in one room; it was not at all difficult, therefore, for Henny to glide away when the time came without Elsie asking troublesome questions.

"Oh, it's all right," she exclaimed, when Henny

told her that mademoiselle wished to see her about a French lesson, "only, where is the use of telling those little fibs? You know perfectly well that mademoiselle does not want you for a French lesson, she is determined that you shall get this prize, and, of course, anyone can see her little game."

"Yes," replied Henny, "but if she thinks that I am going to give her much of that money for M. André, she is finely mistaken."

Elsie laughed in a somewhat irritating manner. The fact is, Henny's beautiful dress had made Elsie green with jealousy.

"You haven't got the prize yet," she said, "and for my part, I don't think you've any chance of it. Of course, if you were allowed to wear that lovely dress, you would get it as far as the personal beauty part goes, but then you are not allowed to wear the dress, so it's all the same as if it hadn't arrived."

Henny smiled in a very superior manner.

"We'll see if it's all the same," she remarked.

"Well, well! I'm sure I don't care whether you get it or not. I haven't a chance, anyhow. It won't do you any good if you do get it, Henny, for mademoiselle will wind you completely round her little finger, and every penny of the money will go to that precious M. André of hers. There, you needn't look so distressed, you won't get it,

notwithstanding your pretty face. How are you to manage the theme part? You don't mean to tell me that you can write a theme like Lotty Raynham?"

"Why not?" exclaimed Henny, who was now very angry.

"You know you can't. It's absurd to see you putting on all those airs. You're not one bit clever, and you know it as well as I do."

Henny's face turned pale with anger.

"In spite of all you say, I expect to win the prize," she remarked. "I did not know you were so jealous, Elsie. It's nothing but jealousy makes you speak to me like that, and I do call it a shame!"

Elsie made no further remark, and Henny ran off to mademoiselle.

It was a lovely night, and mademoiselle sat by her open window. She had put out the candles, and the moonlight shone all over her. When Henny approached she looked up with a sad expression, and drew the little girl down to sit by her side.

"Ah, Henriette, my heart aches vere bad," she exclaimed.

"I'm awfully sorry," replied Henny, "is there anything fresh the matter?"

"It's only that *pauvre, pauvre* André. I have had a letter from his wife, the good Ernestine,

and she say that his *affaires* are simply in hopeless despair. He have no money, and he suffer from hunger. He have no money for food, he have no money for rent, he have no money for garment. He will lose his post in the hippodrome if he buy not a new costume for the fresh programme which is to be acted in one month from now. Ah, Henriette, my poor brother! No wonder I am so vere miserable."

"Yes, it is very sad for you," said Henny, but somehow she did not feel that it was sad at that moment. Mademoiselle had often managed to touch her profoundly with regard to M. André and his woes, but somehow she did not touch her to-night. M. André might need food, and shelter, and raiment, but, even if such were his pitiable condition, Henny did not feel that she was in any way called to supply him with these necessaries of existence.

"My vere dear pupil," exclaimed mademoiselle suddenly, turning her eyes, which looked very solemn and big in the moonlight, full on the little girl's face, "I think, I feel sure, that you win the prize."

"Do you indeed?" said Henny, "but I"—she colored painfully—"I know I'm pretty," she continued, "at least I suppose I'm pretty."

"*Ravissant!*" murmured mademoiselle in a stage whisper.

"But then I'm not clever," continued Henny.

"You would like to win the prize, my pupil?" continued mademoiselle.

"Yes, yes; how can you ask?"

"It would be such a *triomphe*," continued mademoiselle, "the wonderment and the joy of your good parents, the admiration of all the guests. The child so beautiful, so gifted, so honored. Ah, I see it all, I see it all."

"I would love to win the prize," continued Henny, whose heart throbbed under mademoiselle's judicious flattery. "But," she repeated sadly, "I know I'm not clever."

"Henriette," replied mademoiselle, "I will manage that you have the genius as well as the beauty, if you leave it to me."

"What can you mean?"

"I not explain myself; I can't. When the day come you will know. You will say noting when the day come. Your theme will be read, and it will be the most clevere and the most noble; and your lovely face and your clevere theme will win the money. You say noting when the time come, promise me that."

Henny's eyes grew very bright, her heart beat with excitement. She felt frightened, pleased, carried away on a stream of injudicious, wild flattery.

"It would be a disgrace now if you did not get that prize," said mademoiselle.

"I should feel awfully disappointed if I didn't get it."

"You have wrote to your good parents, *n'est ce pas*, to say you would be the happy possessor of the *argent?*" interrogated mademoiselle.

Yes, Henny had certainly done so. She had spoken strongly to her mother on the subject when she had begged hard for the pretty dress.

"Yes," she said, looking full at mademoiselle. "I did let mother think I would get it."

"And she will be there for herself to witness your *triomphe?*"

"Yes; oh, yes."

"Then, Henriette, if you will be guided by me, that prize is yours. You have been my vere good friend, and I help you in this crisis. You will be the most beautiful, and your theme will be the best of all, and in return you will do one thing for me, my dear pupil."

"What is that?" asked Henny.

"Promise to give half of the money to me for André."

"Oh, but——"

"Think what it means to him," said mademoiselle. "The one that is poor and that suffers; the bread, the shelter, the raiment; the grand success in the future; the long *triomphe* to one who has suffered so sore. You win two prizes, Henriette, when you get that money. Oh, promise,

promise! Come to the rescue of one in sore need, and be yourself the envied of all."

"You frighten me," said Henny, "but after all, perhaps there's nothing in it. If I get the prize——"

"You will, I say you will; you get it by my means; without me you don't get it at all. Will you give half to André?"

"Yes; if you insist."

"Here," said mademoiselle, "is a sheet of paper. I have wrote on it these words; here they are, I read them aloud, I read them in the beautiful, chaste moonlight: 'I promise, if I win Mrs. Rivers' prize, to give seven pounds, ten shillings to Mlle. Henri, for one who is as noble as he is unfortunate, as gifted as he is poor.' These are the words, *chérie*," said Mlle. Henri, "and here you put your little name, Henrietta Gaunt."

Mademoiselle put a pen and ink into Henny's hand. She stooped down, and, with a trembling hand, signed the fatal words.

CHAPTER XXIV.

KEEP SILENCE.

HAPPY days fly fast, and the end of June grew on apace. The time for the great prize giving had all but come. Lotty, who had been so excited during the early part of this sunny month of June, was now quiet and resigned; she ceased to talk about the prize, even to Betty.

"Hush," she said one day to her friend, "I'm always thinking about it, but I won't speak of it any more. I can do nothing in any fresh way to win it. My theme has long been written, and lies safely in Miss St. Leger's drawer. I can't even remember what I said in my theme, but I know at the time it seemed good. Anyhow, I can't alter it now, good or bad; it is finished. Then my dress is made and put away. I know I shall look odious in white, but better all in white than in white and green. You shall curl me up if you like, when the day comes; not that I expect heavy hair like mine could curl, but you shall try, if you fancy, when the time arrives. Now, let us talk of something else. Did you ever read Keats, Betty?"

"No," replied Betty. "I am not very fond of reading poetry," she continued.

Lotty burst forth into a panegyric on her favorite poet for the time being, and the two girls, arm in arm, walked down one of the shady garden paths.

Neither did the other girls talk a great deal of the prize, but there was little doubt that it lay as the undercurrent in all their thoughts.

It was Miss St. Leger's custom, year after year, to make a great fuss at the break-up. She invited all her friends who lived in the neighborhood to come to Melville Hall for the great occasion, and in addition, she filled her roomy and commodious house to overflowing. Among the visitors this time who were to stay at Mellville Hall for the great festival, came Colonel and Mrs. Gaunt. Henny did not know whether she was pleased or the reverse when she heard that her parents were coming. She turned slightly pale when Miss St. Leger told her the news, and a more passionate desire than ever to become the possessor of the prize entered into her foolish little brain. Mademoiselle had so flattered her vanity that Henny had little doubt that she would score in the beauty part of the competition, but how was she to manage to come out first in the matter of genius? Henny had many faults, but she was not quite so silly as to suppose herself Lotty's

equal in any way as regarded talent. She was a smart, quick sort of child: she played well for her age, and she learned all her lessons with considerable ease, but where thought came in, where originality and kindling idea were to be to the fore, poor Henny knew well that she was nowhere. No balder, more commonplace little essay could possibly have been written than hers; it was stilted, it was labored. Any idea that it contained was borrowed from the most well-known sources; how, then, could mademoiselle go on insisting that she would win the prize in genius as well as beauty?

By hearing the same thing repeated so often, however, Henny had almost come to believe it, and although, like the rest of the girls, she was silent with regard to the coming honors, she felt morally certain that they would descend on her devoted head. Mrs. Gaunt was a rather silly woman, very pretty, and like her daughter in appearance, but without any depth of character whatever. Henny was the only child, and her father and mother felt that they could not do enough for her.

It was the day before the prize giving, and Colonel and Mrs. Gaunt were walking about the beautiful grounds, with Henny hanging affectionately on her father's arm. They were chatting about the different girls, and Henrietta was

laughing gayly when the sound of carriage wheels caused them all to turn their heads.

"My dear, who is that quaint old lady?" asked Mrs. Gaunt of her little girl.

"It must be Mrs. Rivers," said Henny, her heart beating a little faster as she looked at the old lady, who sat upright in the middle of the carriage. "I know she is expected just about now; yes, of course, it must be her. Oh, dear, oh, dear, I feel quite frightened when I look at her."

"What in the world do you mean, my child?" demanded her mother. "I'm sure I never saw a prettier, more gentle-looking little body. What lovely white hair, and such dark gray eyes, and such a pretty figure. Why, she is quite a booky sort of little old lady. I should like to know her."

"Is she one of your teachers, Henny?" inquired the colonel. "'Pon my word, they do things in good style here; sending a carriage and a pair of horses to meet one of the governesses."

Henrietta burst out laughing.

"How droll of you, father," she cried. "Of course that dear old lady isn't one of our teachers. She is Mrs. Rivers; the prize giver, we call her. She has come all the way from London to be present at the break-up, and to give us the big prize to-morrow."

"What prize?" asked Colonel Gaunt. "How excited you look, my dear child."

"Of course I'm excited," said Henny. "I'm wild about it, wild. I—I want to win it. It was about that I wrote to you, mother, when I asked for the new frock, don't you remember?"

"Of course," exclaimed Mrs. Gaunt, "and I sent a line that very night to Mme. Bonrée, and told her to send you exactly what you ought to have. I hope she sent you something pretty."

"Then you never saw the frock yourself, mother?"

"I?" exclaimed Mrs. Gaunt. "My dear, I had scarcely breathing-time to order my own dresses; besides, I should not have had the faintest idea what you ought to wear. Now, madame's taste in those matters is perfect. Was the dress pretty, Henny?"

"It was lovely, mother; lovely!"

Henrietta gave a deep sigh as she spoke. That dress, considerably dismantled now, lay in her drawer upstairs, but a book muslin, the most *récherché* that could possibly be imagined, was folded away in the opposite drawer, ready to be put on when the right moment came.

Henny was about to descant further on the interesting subject of her wardrobe, when a shrill, high voice behind caused her to start and turn.

and mademoiselle, in a very becoming soft gray dress, came hurriedly up.

"My pupil," she exclaimed, "I won't keep you one minute, you are with your parents. Ah, how happy, how blessed are these reunions!"

"Mother, please, may I introduce you to Mlle. Henri?" said Henny. "Father, this is our French teacher, Mlle. Henri."

The colonel and his wife both bowed to mademoiselle, who dropped a Parisian courtesy of the most perfect style and grace.

"I will not detain your little one more than one moment, dear madame and monsieur," she exclaimed. "I have come to say a word to the little Henriette, but she shall return quick. Ah, madame, you will be proud of this dear little one to-morrow, when she wins the prize *extraordinaire* from the hands of dear Mme. Rivers."

"You don't mean to say that you think Henrietta is really likely to get a prize?" cried Colonel Gaunt, who had a sincere respect for all clever women, and earnestly desired his daughter to excel in mind qualities.

"The great prize will be hers," said mademoiselle. "It is for beauty which—but ah, I make her not vain—it is for genius, and it is for nobility of character, and out of the seven girls in this house, Mlle. Henriette will, I am sure, come out first."

"I am delighted to hear it," remarked Colonel Guant. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure than for you to turn into a clever woman, Henrietta; and, now, look here, you have always been bothering me to give you a string of pearls for your neck. If you get this prize, you shall have it; so there!"

Henny's eyes sparkled. Mademoiselle patted her pupil affectionately on her arm, and led the giddy, excited child away to ask her a question of no special importance, mademoiselle's real object in following Henny being to force an introduction for herself to Colonel and Mrs. Gaunt.

"Now, are you not pleased?" she said, as she looked into the little girl's eyes.

"Yes, yes," said Henny, "it's perfectly splendid. I have longed for those pearls more than anything. My cousin, Bertha Reid, has got such lovely pearls; they were left to her by her mother, who is dead, and I often spoke to father about them, and told him how I longed for some of my own, but he never would promise until just now to buy me even a simple little string of them. Yes, of course, I'm awfully happy at the thought. I hope he'll let me choose them with him. I'll make him get me bigger and finer ones than Bertha's, and then I can twit her about them at Christmas: she's so awfully conceited about hers.

But oh, mademoiselle, suppose I miss the prize after all!"

Mademoiselle looked hard at Henny.

"If you will be led by me," she said, "you are positive, safe to win."

Henny looked hard at her governess in return. Colonel and Mrs. Gaunt had gone into the house; they were alone. Mademoiselle gave Henny a second hard glance. Had the time come for Henrietta to know what she had really done? She must tell her before the themes were read. An exclamation of astonishment from Henny's lips would spoil it all. Had the moment, the crucial moment on which so much depended, arrived?

Henny's pretty color kept coming and going. Mademoiselle possessed a fascination for her which she disliked and feared just now as much as she sometimes enjoyed.

"Mademoiselle, I cannot make out why you look at me as you do," she said suddenly, "and you are so sure, so positive. Why do you go on saying that I am certain to win the prize. You know perfectly well that I am not clever."

"You want to win the prize?" said mademoiselle, in a sort of whisper.

"Of course, of course; how can you ask?"

"It would kill you now to lose it?" continued

mademoiselle. "Think of the girls, think of your father and mother."

"Of course," said Henny; "but you say that I am safe to get it."

"Safe, vere safe," said mademoiselle, "if you do what I tell you."

"What am I to do?"

"Keep silence."

"Mademoiselle, what do you mean? You frighten me; you make my heart beat."

Mademoiselle's face was very cold and hard.

"The time has come when I must tell you something, Henriette," she said. "You get this prize, this prize *magnifique*, because I will it, not because of your beauty, for one touch would make Betty far more beautiful than you, and not because of your talent, for Lotty has genius and you have none; but you get the prize because I wish you to get it, because I want half the money, and perhaps, who can say, more than half the money. Therefore, you will to-morrow be the most beautiful in the school and also the most clevere."

"How am I to be the most clever?" asked Henny. "I can understand the beauty part: you have seen to that; but how can my theme be cleverer than Lotty's?"

"It never can. Lotty has the genius."

"Then how am I to appear cleverer than her?'

"Because, Henriette, in the cause of the unfortunate and the noble, I have done this: I have put your theme into Lotty's envelope, and Lotty's theme into yours; and when the themes are read aloud to-morrow, you will have appeared to have written the wonderful poem, which is in reality the work of Lotty Raynham. The little envelope which contains your name will be in the big envelope with Lotty's theme. *Comprends-tu, chérie!*"

"Yes," said Henny. She turned away, her face was like death.

"You have done this," she said after a pause, "and you expect me to submit?"

"I know you will submit, *mignonne*, for there is no other course. If you struggle against me now, I tell that you yourself have changed the themes. I show your writing to madame in which you promised to give me half the money. You gain no good, Henriette, by resisting me now. You are in my power, little one. I want the money vere bad, and I can only get it through you. You will be silent to-morrow, and you will take the glory, and the praise, and the beautiful purse of gold, and your father the colonel, and your mother *la grande madame*, will be proud of you, and you will show your pearls to your friend Bertha at Christmas. You will be silent, and all will be well for us. There is no other way."

"But Lotty," exclaimed Henny, "Lotty!"

"I care not for Lotty. Two cannot win the prize, and she can write clevere once again, and win other prizes by and by. I take not her genius away; I only give it to you once, just once. Now, come indoors and keep silence."

CHAPTER XXV.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

HENNY followed mademoiselle into the house without uttering a single word. She was a very vain and silly little girl. She had joined mademoiselle in small deceits, she had aided and abetted her in all her schemes for aggrandizing M. André, at the expense of the school, and now, now, Henny knew well that she was completely in the power of the unscrupulous and wicked French governess. Notwithstanding her many faults, Henny could never of her own free will have done what mademoiselle had done for her. She shrank and trembled at the thought of this wickedness. Every scrap of pleasure in the hope of winning the prize left her; in short, no little girl could possibly be more truly wretched. Had she dared, she would have gone to Miss St. Leger and told her the whole miserable truth, but Henny's life of deceit for the last few months had by no means prepared her for this act of courage. She knew of no possible way but to let things take their course, and to take the prize which she now loathed.

when it was offered to her. Elsie, who was Henny's special friend, noticed her pallor and depression at supper, and slipping her hand into hers, asked her if she were ill.

Before she replied, Henny raised her pretty eyes, and encountered those of mademoiselle fixed upon her. There was warning on mademoiselle's smooth face. Henny colored faintly, and confessed that she had a bad headache.

"We can go out for a little after supper," said Elsie. "Perhaps the air will make you feel better, it's such a lovely evening."

Henny tried to speak in a low voice to Elsie. With mademoiselle's eyes on her, she felt that she must make an effort to shake off her depression, and she endeavored to talk, and laugh, and appear as usual.

After supper she and Elsie walked about the garden, and Henny, who was beginning to get an almost reckless feeling, chatted and laughed with her companion, until the subject of the headache and the depression during supper were quite forgotten by the other girls.

Someone called Elsie presently, and she ran into the house. Henny found herself standing alone near the summerhouse. As far as she could see, there was no one anywhere near, it was a perfect night, and the stars shone in myraids in the dark blue sky. No one ought to have been happier

than poor little Henrietta that night; she was sure, almost sure, of honor and victory to-morrow; her father and mother were in the house; she had just been promised what she had always most dearly coveted, a string of pearls to fasten round her soft, white throat. To-morrow she would be queen of the day, and everyone would praise her and pet her. Oh, dear! oh, dear! if only that awful black cloud were not there, if only she could win the coveted prize without appropriating Lotty's work. Henny and Lotty had never been friends, they were opposites in everything. Lottie's *brusquerie*, her downrightness, her honest indifference to all mere external things, must divide her from one so artificial, so vain, so silly as poor Henrietta. There was a nobility about Lotty which Henrietta could never understand. It was impossible for Henny to know how badly, how dreadfully Lotty wanted the prize, but she did know to-night that she was about to commit an awful theft on her schoolfellow, when she appropriated her theme.

"I hate the whole thought," murmured Henny to herself. "I hate Mlle. Henri. When I go back with father and mother to my own home, I'll beg and implore of them never to send me to Melville Hall again. I can't face mademoiselle again, but oh, if I'd only courage not to do the dreadful thing she expects me to do to-morrow

How can I stand up in the midst of the whole school and pretend that I have written Lotty's theme? But oh, on the other hand, how can I confess that I have not done it? How can I tell of those midnight walks in the garden; of Mme. Ernestine, of all the thousand and one things I have done to help mademoiselle, of the money I have collected from the other girls for that odious M. André? I can't confess all these things. I can't disgrace myself; besides, I'd get every girl in the school, except Lotty and Betty, into disgrace if I told; and poor, wretched mademoiselle would be turned away without a character; and father and mother would be so fearfully upset that they'd never forgive me as long as I lived; and, of course, I'd lose my darling pearl necklace forever and ever. No, I can't confess everything now; things must take their course. It's better for Lotty to suffer than for everyone else in the house to suffer. Yes, yes, I'm awfully sorry, I'm miserable, but I'll try and make it up to Lotty in in some other way. Besides, she mightn't have got the prize after all, for she really isn't a bit pretty, and I am; yes, at least I'm pretty."

As Henny thought, walking quickly up and down close to the summerhouse by herself, she was suddenly startled by seeing a tall girl coming toward her across the grass. She raised her eyes and encountered the full, dark glance of Lotty Raynham.

"Is that you, Henny?" exclaimed Lotty. "What are you doing out here by yourself?"

"I'm restless and can't keep still," said Henny. "I wish awfully that to-morrow were over."

"Why?" asked Lotty.

"Oh, you know; there's that prize. You are going in for it too, aren't you, Lotty?"

"I'm trying for it," said Lotty in a curt voice.

"I wish it had never been offered," said Henny with sudden passion. "I wish it hadn't. Why, what's the matter, Lotty? You look as if you'd been crying."

"There's nothing the matter," said Lotty almost roughly. She turned away, and left Henny standing motionless in the middle of the path.

Betty, in her black frock, came running from the house. Lotty passed her with scarcely a word. Betty ran on, the moonlight fell all over her; she was without her hat, and her fair, straight hair hung down her back; the moonlight seemed to spiritualize her delicate little face. Henny turned away when she saw her. Of all people she did not want Betty at the present moment, and Betty had evidently not yet seen her. In turning, however, she knocked down a little pot which stood on the grass; it fell on to the gravel, and got broken. The fall made a slight noise, and attracted Betty.

"Henny, is that you?" she exclaimed. "Stop a minute, I want to say something to you."

"I can't stop," replied Henny. "It's awfully late, and I'm tired; I want to go to bed."

"Well, I'll walk back to the house with you."

Betty came up to Henny, and slipped her hand through her arm. Henny walked on, feeling stubborn and cross. She hated Betty at that moment. It was odious to have Betty's soft hand in hers; it was with an effort she could keep from pushing her away.

"I wish," said Betty suddenly, "I wish with all my heart and soul that the next twenty-four hours were over."

"Well, wishing won't do it," said Henny. "You have got to live through them, whether you like it or not, and I don't see," she continued, "how it matters to you; you haven't much chance of the prize, surely?"

"Of course not," answered Betty, "do you think I'm anxious about myself? No, I'm thinking of Lotty."

"Lotty is so absurd about the prize," said Henny. "Everyone says she is cocksure of it, and it's quite ridiculous of her. It's enough to make one almost glad if she fails; it is really."

"Perhaps you think you'll get it instead," said Betty, turning round and looking full into Henny's face.

Henny stooped suddenly to fasten her shoe-lace.

"Why shouldn't I try for it?" she remarked in a would-be careless tone.

"There's nothing to prevent you, of course," replied Betty. "The prize is open to everyone, and you're pretty, and we all know that mademoiselle is taking special pains with your dress, but still, if I were you, I wouldn't be very happy if I did win that prize. You can't win it except on the score of beauty. You can't touch Lotty in any other way—you can't touch her in character, and you can't touch her in genius, and, Henny, you can't touch her in soul. Lotty's soul is big, grand."

"That's all very fine," replied Henny. "That's your opinion, Betty, but it may not be the opinion of other people—other people may not consider me quite the empty-headed doll you pretend that I am. Wait until to-morrow. You may change your mind to-morrow."

"O Henny, please don't be cross," said Betty; "the last thing in the world I wish just now is to vex you. I said to myself this evening, perhaps Henny will be noble after all."

"What in the world do you mean, child?" exclaimed Henny.

"Oh, I know there isn't a bit of use asking," said Betty, in a sort of desperation, "but if you'd just try not to look *too* pretty to-morrow. Your

beauty is really the only thing which stands between Lotty and the prize, and that prize, that money, can't possibly mean to you what it means to her. You are rich, Henny; your father and mother are rich people, but you don't know about Lotty!"

"I wish you wouldn't tell me," said Henny, speaking suddenly in a husky voice; "I know nothing whatever about Lotty Raynham. I can't tell whether she's rich or poor, and I don't wish to know. I tell you, Betty, I don't *wish* to; it isn't fair, it isn't a bit fair; I won't listen to you. I'm going into the house. Good-night, good-night!"

"One minute," called Betty after her, but Henny would not heed; she pressed her fingers to her ears, and rushed away. She gained her own room, feeling quite weak and trembling.

Elsie was already in bed, but she was wide awake, and inclined to talk.

"Well, Henny, how late you are! Is your headache quite gone?"

"Yes, thanks."

"I heard you talking to Betty, just now."

"Yes," exclaimed Henny, "and I do think Betty Falkoner is awfully unfair; she has quite gone mad on the subject of that Lotty of hers; fancy what she said to me now."

"What?" asked Elsie eagerly.

"She hoped I would not make myself look too

pretty to-morrow. She said my pretty face was the only thing that stood between Lotty and the prize."

"Well, I never!" remarked Elsie in disgust. "I must honestly say I never cared for Betty. I think there's something awfully queer and sneaking about her."

"Well, at any rate, she doesn't do it for herself," said Henny. "I will say that, at least; but the bare idea of asking me not to look pretty. I can't help my looks, can I?"

"Of course you can't," said Elsie. "I naturally, too, want you to win the prize, for you promised to give me five shillings, don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes," said Henny; "but it's time enough to think of that when I get it."

"Mademoiselle seems positive that you'll get it."

"She only says that to encourage me," replied Henny; "of course, I don't suppose I really have a chance."

As she spoke, she took off her frock, and putting on a pretty blue dressing-gown, began to brush out her nut-brown hair. Elsie lay in bed, and looked at her.

"Do you know," she said suddenly, "that if I didn't want my five shillings very badly, I'd be almost glad if you didn't get the prize, Henny!"

"Well, that is a kind thing to say," exclaimed Henny, "and you my greatest friend!"

"Of course, I'm very fond of you," replied Elsie, "and if the prize were just honor and glory, of course nothing would delight me more than for you to have it, but then it happens to be a good big sum of money, and you are the richest girl in the school. You can't possibly want the money, you know, Henny."

"Oh, can't I?" replied Henny. "My father and mother being rich doesn't make me rich."

"Well, anyhow, you don't want it as badly as Lotty does. Lotty was crying after supper; I saw her."

"Crying!" said Henny putting down her brush and comb. "I thought so; I noticed her eyes when I was in the garden, I wonder what she was crying about."

"Well, I think she had a letter from her mother, and I fancy she was ill. I'm not sure, of course, but I know there was a letter, and after she had read it Lotty's eyes were very red, but, you know, she won't confide in any of us except Betty, so, of course, I may be wrong."

"Of course, you're wrong," said Henny. "Why should her mother be ill?"

"Well, anyhow, there was something in the letter to fret her," said Elsie, "or she wouldn't have cried. Lotty isn't the girl to cry for nothing, and, of course, we all know that she's just passionately devoted to her mother, and she's poor, very poor."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't tell me any more!" said Henny. "It isn't my fault if Lotty's mother is ill, and if Lotty is poor. I hope she'll get the prize, if I don't, but if I get it I don't mean to give it up to anyone."

Henny tumbled into bed without saying her prayers. She blew out the candle.

"Good-night!" she said to Elsie.

"You have forgotten your prayers!" exclaimed Elsie.

"No, I haven't; I'll say them in bed; good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Elsie.

Elsie was soon asleep, thinking comfortably of the five shillings which Henny had promised her if the great prize were hers, but there was no sleep for the little girl who lay in bed near her own.

Say her prayers? No, Henny could not pray that night. Was Lotty's mother very ill? Was Lotty poor, and was she, Henny, a thief? Was she going deliberately to rob her schoolfellow for the sake of vainglory and empty praise? Henny felt afraid as she looked out into the darkness. It seemed to her as if she were caught in a trap, and could neither go backward nor forward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHO WAS THE WRITER?

IT was a perfect summer's day, and Miss St. Leger arranged that the prize giving should take place in the garden. A great tent was put up where light refreshments could be obtained, and the different guests who flocked to Melville Hall for the occasion found pleasant seats under the wide-spreading trees which adorned the shady lawn. Mrs. Rivers was, of course, the important person on this auspicious occasion. She was a charming-looking little old lady, and no one, to see her as she stepped with the easy grace of a little queen across the lawn, would have supposed that she had any peculiar ideas upon any subject under the sun. She just looked what she was, a very dainty, and very pretty old lady. Her gray satin dress, of the softest shade of dove, was so thick and good that it scarcely rustled as she moved; she wore a cap of old point lace over her snow-white hair, and her little wrinkled hands and her small throat were enveloped in dainty ruffles of the same. Her eyes were very dark, and

her complexion of a smooth, soft olive. As a young girl she must have been beautiful, but as an old lady she was still more beautiful, for the grace of kindness shone out of her eyes and smiled on her lips, and the experience of a good and well-spent life seemed to radiate from her expressive face.

Mrs. Rivers had said to Miss St. Leger the night before:

"I don't wish to see any of the girls until I meet them on the lawn to-morrow. I must be quite unprejudiced with regard to my prize. I don't wish to see the girls nor to hear anything about them in advance; I will do just what I think right when the time comes."

"Forgive me," said Miss St. Leger, "but I hope, my dear friend, you will try to be really fair in this important decision. All the girls have, I know, taken great pains to please you in this matter, and you will, I trust, bestow the prize on the girl who really deserves it, and not, as you did on the last occasion, on the child who took your fancy at the moment."

"Ah," said Mrs. Rivers, "and who was right on that occasion? Who did best work in the world by and by—the girl you wanted to bestow the prize on, or the one whom my penetrating eyes saw was the most worthy? I'm afraid you must leave this matter in my hands, Agatha. This

prize is an old woman's fancy, and she must give it to the one she thinks really deserving. Now, my dear, don't worry me any further on the subject; you can bestow your school prizes according to the conventional ideas of school justice, but I will give mine exactly as the spirit moves me."

Now the moment had come when Mrs. Rivers was to ascend the sort of little throne prepared for her, and to look, for the first time, at the seven young girls who were to compete for the Rivers prize.

All the visitors were in their places when the girls, headed by mademoiselle, entered the little arena, and bowed to Mrs. Rivers and Miss St. Leger. A large table covered with a crimson cloth stood before Miss St. Leger, and this was piled with books, tennis bats, and other tempting-looking prizes. In front of Mrs. Rivers was a much smaller table with a dark blue velvet cloth flung over it; on the center of this table stood a little ebony casket, in which, the girls knew, the precious purse with its treasure lay.

When the girls appeared, walking straight through the midst of the guests in a long white line, all the visitors cheered and clapped their hands, and, in truth, seven more interesting young creatures it would have been difficult to see.

Excitement had lent a color to Lotty's sallow cheeks, and as Betty had been careful to see that

her simple white dress had been put on neatly, and as Betty had drilled her with regard to her carriage until the poor girl's head felt quite giddy, she entered the arena with a certain grace which conscious power usually gives. Lotty would be a magnificent woman by and by, but she was in the embryo state still. A penetrating eye, however, could see grand possibilities about her, and Mrs. Rivers fixed her bright eyes on the young face with marked interest. Fortunately for Lotty's appearance, her heavy masses of splendid hair refused to be curled or crimped, and had, in consequence, to be rolled round her shapely head in a thick coil.

Henny came next to Lotty in the procession, and now all the care which mademoiselle had taken with regard to her dress was abundantly manifest. Her little head of shining curls, her bright eyes, her rose-leaf complexion, her neat figure, were all set off to the best advantage by the simplicity of that perfectly made muslin. The only touch of color on the dress was a bunch of rosebuds, which Henny at the last moment had stuck in her belt. She took her place next to Lotty, and bowed low to Mrs. Rivers and her teacher. There was a murmur of admiration among the visitors as they saw Henny's charming face, and as she looked across the sea of faces to where her father and mother sat, there was a new

sort of troubled timidity in her eyes, which added to her fascination. Mrs. Rivers gave her a keen glance, and, for a brief moment a look of satisfaction smoothed away an anxious wrinkle in the little old lady's brow.

Betty, however, had yet to be viewed. No one had taken less pains than Betty about her toilet that morning. Her hair hung straight, as usual, down her back. Her neat white frock fitted her well, however, and her sweet face rose flower-like above the simple frill of lace which surrounded the neck of her frock. None of the girls had seen Betty in white before. It was the dress which suited her delicate beauty the best of all: the girls could not help murmuring together as they looked at her. If Henny looked like a rosebud, Betty was a white lily. An unconscious white lily, too, for no thought of herself filled those dark gray eyes, nor trembled round that sweet mouth. The other girls all took their places. One and all, they were at their best, and Miss St. Leger felt proud of them.

The proceedings began with the giving away of the annual prizes, and mademoiselle, becomingly dressed in her favorite black silk, came up to assist Miss St. Leger with this duty. One by one the girls' names were called out. One by one, amid the cheers of their companions and the visitors, they came up to receive their handsome

gifts. Here Lotty scored well, carrying away several handsomely bound volumes, which she laid on the grass at a little distance. Her face was pale now, and the look of bright animation, which would have made all the difference in her appearance, had completely left it. She looked like a girl weighted with a heavy load of care. Henny also recieved several prizes, and Betty was made intensely happy with a prize for conduct, which consisted of a handsomely bound volume of Tennyson.

This part of the programme being over, the moment came when, according to well-established precedent, Miss St. Leger was to read the prize themes aloud.

Before doing so, she turned and addressed Mrs. Rivers.

"I have pleasure in telling you," she said, "that in my opinion, as far as I am capable of judging, each of my seven dear pupils is competent to try for your prize. Since the moment when I announced to them that you intended to offer this valuable prize to the school, I have detected nothing in the conduct of any of them which would have made it necessary for me to ask any one girl to withdraw from the competition. There has been no deceit, no underhand dealing of any sort, all has been fair and above board. I believe my seven girls to be honorable

minded English girls, who would not stoop to do anything which their conscience told them was wrong. It is for you, Mrs. Rivers, to decide whose conduct, when all have been good, is the best, whose genius is the most remarkable, and whose beauty of character and person is, in your opinion, the most absolutely perfect. With regard to the part of the competition which relates to talent, you have decided that a theme, either in prose or poetry, on a given subject, should be written by each of the girls. Guided by your own choice, the subject they have chosen for their themes is, The Perfect Girl. These seven envelopes contain their opinions on this important subject. I have not the least idea what the essays are like. They have been the unaided work, in every case, of the young competitor, and to make matters all the more fair, the girls have not even signed their names to the essays, but have enclosed them in small envelopes, inside the larger ones, which contain the essays. I will now proceed to read the different themes aloud."

There was a little pause when Miss St. Leger had finished her short speech: a breathless pause of expectation on the part of everyone. Lotty turned ghastly pale, Elsie St. Leger looked eagerly at Henny, mademoiselle sat down, and, unfurling her fan, gently fanned her hot face.

Henny's eyes, however, grew bright, and almost fixed. She drew herself up to her full height, and turned her back slightly on Lotty, and her eyes away from mademoiselle.

Miss St. Leger opened the first envelope, took out the crackling foolscap paper, and began to read aloud.

A titter of nervous laughter relieved the strain of expectation. Some of the verses in this poetical effusion ran as follows:

"I'd like to describe her, the Perfect Girl,
But all my ideas get into a whirl.

"She's lovely, and graceful, and good, and most fair,
With a rose-leaf complexion beyond all compare.

"She's good, and she's clever, she's gentle and wise,
Her tresses are golden, and azure her eyes.

"She's never untidy, but very neat in her clothes,
And everyone loves her wherever she goes."

The eyes of the other girls were fixed upon Marian, who blushed and tossed her head.

Miss St. Leger waited for a moment and then proceeded to read to the end of Marian's effusion. It was considered very good by most of her companions, and raised an amused smile among the guests. When Miss St. Leger had finished reading these fine strains of poetry, she returned them to their wrapper, and, without comment, laid the envelope on Mrs. Rivers' little table.

The next essay was in prose; it was crude, but thoughtful; the ideas of the young writer were unquestionably correct; there was a sad note underlying the brave but youthful words. More than one girl glanced at Betty as this little paper was being read. It expressed her sentiments, which, although very childish in utterance, were full of womanly sweetness.

"I wish I could say what I want to say better," were the last words of the essay. Again there was applause among the guests, but it was not so hearty as in the case of the jingles. The envelope was placed before Mrs. Rivers, and Miss St. Leger went on reading.

Very commonplace and untidy both in intention and execution were the next few papers. The girls who wrote had scarcely got any grip of the subject. The guests failed to applaud, and Miss St. Leger returned the papers to their envelopes in the midst of a distinctly gloomy atmosphere.

There were now only two more papers to read.

Miss St. Leger opened the first, glanced at it for a moment and then proceeded to read aloud the following strain:

"The Perfect Girl! Methinks I see her now,
She stands before my gaze with tranquil brow.
How shall I paint her graces wondrous fair,
Her virtues many, and her beauties rare?

Ah, no, my friends, it cannot be—I shrink
From praising her with sober pen and ink.
Yet I must try, if I the prize would win,
So now I'll pause no longer but begin.

"My heroine, as you may truly see,
Is everything that mortal girl can be.
Directly when the bell rings in the morning,
She quickly rises without other warning.
She's always ready in her place at prayers,
And never stops to chatter on the stairs ;
She always knows her lessons through and through,
And never speaks until she's spoken to ;
She puts things back exactly in their place,
And does her hair with most becoming grace.
She never spills the ink nor spoils her books.
She's most particular about her looks.
In fact, if I described her day and night,
I never could tell all her merits quite."

There was some more of this rather ambitious tirade: the girls glanced at Henny, but her face was still absolutely pale and unresponsive. Whose was the work? It was not bad, they said to one another; and yet—and yet how commonplace—how doggerel-like; even the jingles had more go about them.

Without any comment, the essay was laid before Mrs. Rivers, and the last envelope opened.

It was a mere chance, after all, which made the last paper the best. From the dull region of poor attempts, of juvenile efforts, of mediocrity and commonplacedness, the guests were aroused to

listen to the full but tender notes of a totally different order of work.

As the first words fell from Miss St. Leger's lips, Lotty raised her head boldly and looked at her mistress. Miss St. Leger scarcely raised her voice at first, but as she proceeded, and the fullness of the thoughts and the richness of the young ideas were borne in upon her, her own voice gathered fullness and depth. Everyone listened with breathless and reverent attention, and when the last words of poor Lotty's poem had been finished, the silent place was awakened by a perfect storm of enthusiasm and applause.

Who was the writer? Where was the girl who could do work like that? Several people said they wished to be introduced to her: they would like to shake hands with her. Oh, yes, beyond any doubt, she would be heard of in the future. Her talent was of a high and remarkable order.

These murmured words kept falling from many pairs of lips. A sort of indistinct buzz reached Lotty's ears. She moved a step or two away and leaned against a neighboring tree for support. She cared nothing at this moment for the success of her poem; it was the result—the grand result—she looked for. Would the poem carry her successfully to her goal? Would it do what her young, longing heart desired? Would it help and save her mother? Ambition, applause, mere

success of any sort would have been as sawdust in Lotty's mouth just then.

She was awakened from a sort of amazed stupor by hearing astonished voices in her ears. People were saying all sorts of things; the orderly groups had broken up. Betty came suddenly close to her and took her hand. What were they all saying? What had happened? Henny—what did it mean? Why were people crowding round Henny? Why were they shaking hands with her? Why did Miss St. Leger call her up to the table and kiss and congratulate her? What in the world was the matter? Was Lotty asleep? Was it all a dream? Why was Betty looking at her with a glow of troubled, indignant love in her eyes?

Then, like a trumpet blast, certain words rang out clearly on the air, and seemed to awaken her out of her trance:

"There is no doubt," said Mrs. Rivers in her clear, full, silvery voice, "as to the successful winner of the prize. The writer of that magnificent piece of poetry, which I have just had the pleasure of listening to, is, I find, Miss Henrietta Gaunt. Any girl, at any period of life, might be proud of such sentiments so rendered. I am sure I only express the feelings of all present when I announce Henrietta Gaunt the successful winner of my prize on the three heads; that of beauty of

person, beauty of character, and that divine genius which means the highest beauty of soul. May you be happy in your future life, Henrietta, and fulfill the lovely promise of your youth!"

As Mrs. Rivers spoke she placed the purse in Henrietta's trembling hands, and bending forward, kissed the little girl solemnly on her white brow.

Cheer after cheer rose up from the crowd.

"Come away, Lotty," said Betty.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BETTY TO THE RESCUE.

IT was Betty's voice which thoroughly aroused Lotty to action. She shook off her trance-like condition with a violent effort, put up her hand in her favorite fashion to sweep back the thick hair from her brow, and said aloud:

"Why has Henny got the prize?"

"Principally because of her magnificent poem," said Elsie, coming up and speaking to Lotty. "Oh, of course, you're jealous, and I'm not a bit surprised: we all did think that you'd win in the genius part of the competition, Lotty. Who would have imagined that Henrietta would turn out a splendid work of that sort, and that you'd do that poor thing about the girl putting by her clothes, etc., etc.?"

"Do you mean to say," said Lotty, with a choking sound in her voice, "that Henny has got the prize because she is supposed to have written the poem which was last read aloud? Do you mean to tell me that?"

"Lotty, *chérie*," just then sounded mademoi-

selle's voice in her ears, "will you come here for one little minute? I have a word to say."

"No, Lotty, don't go!" said Betty. Betty's eyes were blazing. She was troubled with a memory. Like a flash before her mental vision arose that morning when she had gone downstairs to fetch her own little theme, and had found Lotty's desk open and an envelope of mademoiselle's lying on the floor close by. She looked full up now into Lotty's pale face.

"That last poem was yours, Lotty, was it not?" she said.

"Yes," said Lotty, "it was mine."

Mademoiselle hastily interposed.

"You will do yourself harm by making a fuss," she said to Lotty; "you know *parfaitement* what will be said if you interfere now. The dear Henriette have won the prize; that was her essay: that was her poem *magnifique*, it was in her envelope, with her name in the little envelope inclosed. It is impossible that anyone else should claim the work of dear Henriette. But your verses were good, too, Mlle. Lotty, only just a little of the vere commonplace."

"Something has been done," said Betty, "something is wrong. Come with me, Lotty. I may as well say at once that I don't believe you, mademoiselle. I know that poem was not Henny's; she couldn't write it. Only one girl in the school

could write it; that girl is Lotty. I will speak to Miss St. Leger. I will—I must!"

"O Betty, come back!" said poor Lotty.

But Betty neither heeded nor heard. Mrs. Rivers was still seated by her little table, Miss St. Leger was standing close by talking to some of the visitors. Henny had slipped her hand inside her father's arm. Her face was flushed, her eyes bright, too bright; she was excited, carried out of herself by a terrible triumph. Betty ran into the midst of the group.

"I want to say something," she said.

Betty Falkoner was supposed to be a timid little girl, but, when really aroused, there was a boldness about her which nothing could subdue. Mademoiselle and her schoolfellows had all discovered this about Betty: there were moments when she could not be suppressed. This was one of them.

"I want to say something," she repeated; "it's very important. Miss St. Leger, don't let anyone go away."

Everyone turned at Betty's voice, at her extraordinary words, at her defiant, fierce, agitated manner.

Miss St. Leger replied in a voice of distinct annoyance.

"You had better say what you want to say to me alone, and presently," she said, great disapproval and displeasure in her tone.

"No, everyone must hear," said Betty; "it's about Lotty. The last poem which was read was Lotty's work, not Henny's. If you gave Henny the prize, because you thought she wrote that poem, Mrs. Rivers, you made a mistake; it was Lotty's poem. Henny couldn't write verses like that."

"Betty," said Miss St. Leger, "how dare you make such an accusation against your schoolfellow! Do you know that you are saying a very wicked thing? The splendid verses, which have so justly won for Henrietta the prize, were taken by my own hands out of her envelope, the envelope which contained her name inside. How dare you say that they were written by anyone else?"

"They were written by Lotty," repeated Betty. "When they were being read aloud, I knew quite well who had written them, and I have just asked Lotty, and she—— Come here, Lotty!" called out Betty.

Lotty walked slowly forward across the grass, her face was deadly pale, her dark eyes sought the ground. It was at this moment that, unperceived by anyone, mademoiselle slipped softly away toward the house.

"That *enfant terrible*, that *méchante*, Betty Falkoner, she spoil all, all," she muttered.

Nobody had eyes or ears for mademoiselle just then; the attention of all the crowd was fixed on

Betty, who took Lotty's hand, dragged her in front of Mrs. Rivers, and said:

"Speak, Lotty! you never told a lie in your life; speak out!"

Lotty raised her eyes.

Out of their splendid depths there flashed a look of indignant pain.

"Something extraordinary, something I can't understand, has happened," she said. "I did write those verses."

The essence of truth was in her words; she looked down again, standing motionless beside Betty, who faced Miss. St. Leger and Mrs. Rivers.

"But the verses were not in your envelope, my dear," said Miss St. Leger. "This is a most extraordinary and terrible thing; the verses were in Henrietta's envelope. It was simply impossible—impossible that they could be changed. You know your desks were always locked, and if there happens to be in the school a girl base enough to interfere with the work of the others, she could not do so."

"I found Lotty's key lying on the floor at the foot of her desk a fortnight ago," said Betty, "and when I tried her desk it was open."

Miss St. Leger's face turned very pale.

"Come here, Henrietta," she said; "you are implicated in this terrible charge which Betty

Falkoner has brought against the school. I am sure, my love, you can clear yourself, but I must ask you a few questions."

"Go, Henrietta," said Colonel Gaunt. He slipped her hand from his arm; a stern, grave sort of look had crept about the mouth of the brave soldier. It was impossible for him to believe for a moment that Henrietta was guilty, but yet there was Lotty's face; that girl, yes, he was certain of it, that girl couldn't tell a lie.

Henrietta went slowly up to the table. Her poor little face looked almost abject in its expression of terror.

"You must tell me the truth, my dear," said Miss St. Leger gently. "That beautiful poem was your work, was it not?"

At this moment, and before poor Henny had time to utter a word, a sudden noise among the crowd of people caused everyone to turn their heads. A fat woman, a total stranger, was forcing her way in violent agitation through the crowd.

"Where is my sister, Mlle. Henri?" she cried. "I want her *vite*, vere *vite*. André, ah, he die, he die! Where is Mlle. Henri?" The fat woman looked round her distractedly. Mlle. Henri was nowhere in sight, Elsie St. Leger shrank back in terror of being recognized, but Henny, whose pretty little figure stood out in bold relief,

attracted the wild and excited gaze of the fat foreigner.

"Ah, Mlle. Henriette," she screamed, "you are there, and have you von the big prize? Ah, I see you have! I see it in your hand. Then give me the money at once, my leetle mademoiselle, the seven pound ten which you did promise in writing. André, he die, for want of doctor, and food, and the comforts which sustain. Oh, I am in a state of distraction! Give me the money at once, my dear little mademoiselle."

"Henrietta, what does this mean?" exclaimed Miss St. Leger. "How do you know this woman? What promise have you made her? Explain yourself at once, my dear. Who is this woman?"

Mme. Ernestine, who was as passionate as she was French, turned fiercely round at these words.

"I am the sister-in-law of your governess, Mlle. Henri," she cried, "and this dear child, she have met me often, often. Her heart was kind; she have met me at night in the garden, often and often; she pitied my *pauvre* André, who is so ill, and who suffers sore. My sister say that if Henrietta win the prize, half the money shall go to André. There is the purse of gold in the leetle lady's hand. I want the money for André, who is ill unto death."

"Henrietta, speak; is this true?" exclaimed Miss St. Leger.

There was a moment of awful silence.

"Speak, Henrietta. Tell the truth at once," cried Colonel Gaunt.

"Yes, I'll tell everything," said Henny. She took the purse and flung it with violence on the ground. "I don't want it," she said. "I didn't earn it. Lotty is right—she wrote that poem; I didn't. Mademoiselle wanted me to get the prize, because—because her brother was poor, and she wished me to give him some of the money, and she changed the poems a fortnight ago, but she only told me what she had done yesterday. After she had told me I was too frightened to tell. I wanted to tell; I didn't want to take the prize from Lotty, but I was frightened—I was frightened. Oh, I am the most miserable girl in all the world!"

There was a dead silence. Henny had fallen on her knees. Her hands were pressed to her little hot face; scalding tears of shame and agony trickled through her fingers.

"Come with me, my dear," said Miss St. Leger, "come away with me. Mme. Ernestine, have the goodness to follow me into the house."

Miss St. Leger walked away, holding Henny's hand. Fat Mme. Ernestine waddled after them There was another pause; no one knew exactly

what to do or to say. Colonel and Mrs. Gaunt had followed Miss St. Leger to the house.

"This is a very terrible complication," said Mrs. Rivers suddenly. "I must reconsider the whole question. Henrietta Gaunt is not what I thought her. Will someone have the goodness to pick up that purse?"

Betty stooped and put it into Mrs. Rivers' lap. The old lady clasped her hand over it, and slipped it into her pocket. Her eyes were suddenly fixed on Betty's face.

"You are a good, brave child, Betty Falkoner," she said, "you have the courage of your convictions. It is a splendid trait to have the courage of one's convictions. Lotty Raynham, your face interests me. I do not know that anyone can get the prize on this occasion, for it does not seem to me that anyone has quite earned it in all its conditions. There are better things than prizes in the world, however. Betty Falkoner and Lotty Raynham, I should like to have a talk with you both, my loves, in the summerhouse. Follow me at once, please."

But of that talk this story has no space to tell. Suffice it to say, that Lotty Raynham was able to give her mother her much-needed holiday, that Betty went with them, and that the three benefited much from the change.

Mlle. Henri left Melville Hall that day in the

company of her sister-in-law. Mme. Ernestine, and the girls of Miss St. Leger's school never met her again.

Of Betty's future, of Lotty's ambitions, of poor Henny's very true repentance, there may be something to say in the future. For the present the story is told.

THE END.

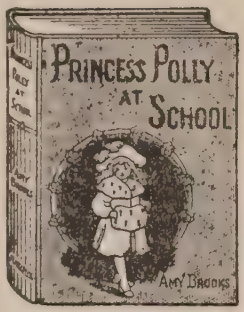
MRS. L. T. MEADE'S

POPULAR STORIES FOR GIRLS

These ever-charming *Girls Stories in a New and Handsome Edition.* Bound in cloth. Illustrated. Per vol. 50c.

(1) Bad Little Hannah.
(2) Bashful Fifteen.
(3) Betty: A Schoolgirl.
(4) Bevy of Girls, A.
(5) Bunch of Cherries, A.
(6) Children of Wilton Chase.
(7) Children's Pilgrimage, The.
(8) Daddy's Girl.
(9) Deb and the Duchess.
(10) Four on an Island.
(11) Gay Charmer, A.
(12) Girl in Ten Thousand, A.
(13) Girls, New and Old.
(14) Girls of Mrs. Pritchard's School.
(15) Girls of St. Wodes, The.
(16) Girls of the True Blue.
(17) Good Luck.
(18) In Time of Roses.
(19) Light O' the Morning.
(20) Little Mother to the Others, A.
(21) Madcap, A.
(22) Manor School, The.
(23) Merry Girls of England.
(24) Miss Nonentity.
(25) Modern Tomboy, A.
(26) Out of the Fashion.
(27) Palace Beautiful, The.
(28) Polly: A New Fashioned Girl.
(29) Rebellion of Lil Carrington, The.
(30) Red Rose and Tiger Lily.
(31) Ring of Rubies, A.
(32) Sweet Girl Graduate, A.
(33) Temptation of Oliver Latimer, The.
(34) Torquoise and Ruby.
(35) Very Naughty Girl, A.
(36) Wild Kitty.
(37) World of Girls, A.
(38) Young Mutineer, A.

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO. Publishers



THE Princess Polly SERIES

By Amy Brooks

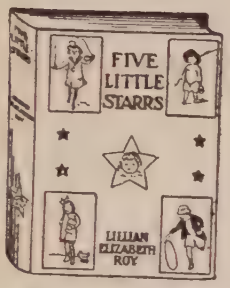
Size 5¾ x 7¾ inches
Six illustrations by the author.
Bound in cloth, stamped in gold and colors.

Price, Net, 50 Cents Each

Polly Sherwood, named Princess Polly by her admiring playmates, is a sweet-tempered, sunny, loveable little girl. The story of her childhood days and of her pleasant and happy times with her little friends, is told in the author's most pleasing style. Every little girl who makes the acquaintance of Polly Sherwood will love her, and parents will be glad to place in the hands of their children such clean, uplifting and inspiring books as these.

1. **Princess Polly**
2. **Princess Polly's Playmates**
3. **Princess Polly at School**
4. **Princess Polly by the Sea**
5. **Princess Polly's Gay Winter**
6. **Princess Polly at Play**

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO. Publishers



THE FIVE LITTLE STARRS SERIES

BY

LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY

Illustrated. Bound in cloth. Price per volume

35 CENTS

These entertaining stories of the Five Little Starr children and their friends were written for little ones who will delight in their clean, healthy, out-and in-door adventures. The author knows how to hold the interest of children without the aid of any sensational features.

1—Five Little Starrs
2—Five Little Starrs on a Canal Boat
3—Five Little Starrs on a Ranch
4—Five Little Starrs in an Island Cabin
5—Five Little Starrs in the Canadian Forest
6—Five Little Starrs on a Motor Tour
7—Five Little Starrs in Alaska.
(*In Preparation*)

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO. Publishers

The Dorothy Books

By Evelyn Raymond

Size 5¼ x 7¾ inches

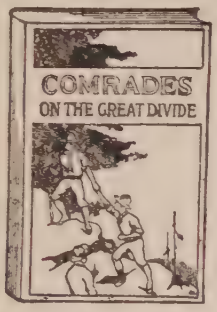
Illustrated. Bound in cloth with colored inlay and jacket.

Price, per Volume, 60 Cents

These stories of an American girl by an American author have made "Dorothy" a household synonym for all that is fascinating. Truth and realism are stamped on every page. The interest never flags, and is ofttimes intense. No more happy choice can be made for gift books, so sure are they to win approval and please not only the young in years, but also "grown-ups" who are young in heart and spirit.

1. Dorothy
2. Dorothy at Skyrie
3. Dorothy's Schooling
4. Dorothy's Travels
5. Dorothy's House Party
6. Dorothy in California
7. Dorothy on a Ranch
8. Dorothy's House Boat
9. Dorothy at Oak Knowe
10. Dorothy's Triumph
11. Dorothy's Tour

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO Publishers



The Comrades

By Ralph Victor

Size 5¼ x 7⅝ inches

Illustrated. Bound in cloth with colored jacket.

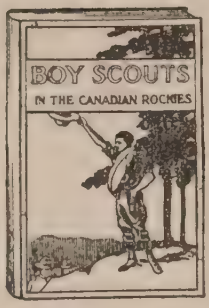
Price, per Volume, 40 Cents

Ralph Victor is probably the best equipped writer of up-to-date boys' stories of the present day. He has traveled or lived in every land, has shot big game with Sears in India, has voyaged with Jack London, and was a war correspondent in Natal and Japan. The lure of life in the open has always been his, and his experiences have been thrilling and many.

The author gets full opportunity to exhibit his unusual talent for the description of American field sports.

1. Comrades in Camp
2. Comrades in New York
3. Comrades on the Ranch
4. Comrades in New Mexico
5. Comrades on the Great Divide
6. Comrades at School
7. Comrades at Winton Hall
8. Comrades on Winton Oval
9. Comrades on River and Lake
10. Comrades with the Winton Cadets

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO Publishers



Boy Scout Books

By Ralph Victor

Size 5¼ x 7⅝ inches

Illustrated. Bound in cloth with colored jacket.

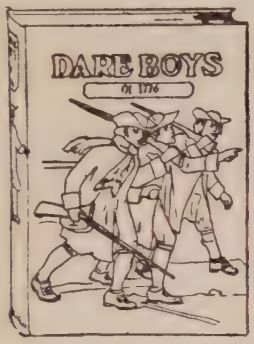
Price, per Volume, 40 Cents

The Boy Scout Movement has secured a hold on the American boy that is remarkable in its far-reaching effects. It is doing a great work in the development of manliness, self-confidence and physical perfection and is making better citizens out of the members of the organization.

This series will foster interest in the Boy Scout Organization. There is excitement such as every boy's book should contain. There are many and varied experiences, and much worth-while information about out-door sports and camp life, in which the youths take part.

1. The Boy Scouts' Patrol
2. The Boy Scouts' Motor-Cycles
3. The Boy Scouts' Canoe Trip
4. The Boy Scouts in the Canadian Rockies
5. The Boy Scouts' Air Craft
6. The Boy Scouts on the Yukon
7. The Boy Scouts in the North Woods
8. The Boy Scouts in the Black Hills

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO Publishers



The Dare Boys

By
Stephen Angus Cox

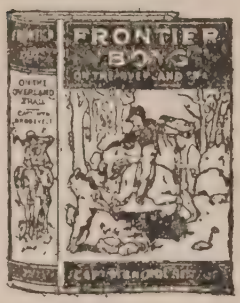
Size 5¼ x 7⅝ inches
Illustrated. Bound in cloth with Picture inlay

Price, per Volume, 40 Cents

The author of the Dare Boys is specially equipped through long study and research to write upon the life and adventures of the revolutionary period. Every item of historical reference is absolutely correct. The trials and inherent bravery of the sturdy warriors of this epoch are always subjects worth while, but here the dash and bravery of the two Dare boys adds immeasurably to the interest.

1. The Dare Boys of 1776
2. The Dare Boys on the Hudson
3. The Dare Boys in Trenton
4. The Dare Boys on the Brandywine
5. The Dare Boys in the Red City
6. The Dare Boys After Benedict Arnold
7. The Dare Boys in Virginia
8. The Dare Boys With General Greene
9. The Dare Boys With Lafayette
10. The Dare Boys and the "Swamp Fox"
11. The Dare Boys at Vincennes
12. The Dare Boys in the North West

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO Publishers



The Frontier Boys

By Capt. Wyn Roosevelt

Size 5⅛ x 7¾ inches
Bound in cloth, with colored jacket.

Price 50 Cents Each.

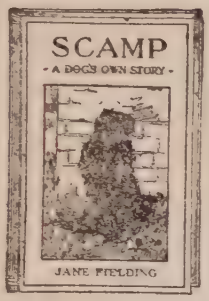
This series tells the adventures of Jim, Joe, and Tom Darlington, first in their camp wagon as they follow the trail to the great West in the early days. They are real American boys, resourceful, humorous, and—but you must meet them. You will find them interesting company. They meet with thrilling adventures and encounters, and stirring incidents are the rule, not exception.

Historically, these books present a true picture of a period in our history as important as it was picturesque, when the nation set its face toward this vast unknown West, and conquered it.

It is the youth of a nation presented in the lives of the characters.

1. **Frontier Boys on Overland Trail**
2. **Frontier Boys in Colorado**
3. **Frontier Boys in the Rockies**
4. **Frontier Boys in the Grand Canyon**
5. **Frontier Boys in Mexico**
6. **Frontier Boys on the Coast**
7. **Frontier Boys in Hawaii**
8. **Frontier Boys in the Sierras**
9. **Frontier Boys in the Saddle**
10. **Frontier Boys in Frisco.**
11. **Frontier Boys in the South Seas**

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO. Publishers



Furry Folk Stories

Edited by Jane Fielding

Size, 5¼x7⅝ inches

Illustrated with colored frontispiece and other pictures in black and white. Colored jacket.

Price, per Volume, 40 Cents

A series of life tales of our four-footed friends, related by the animals themselves, and edited by Jane Fielding. These stories are accurate in details of animal habits and ways, and impart valuable information to the young reader through a medium that is entertaining and pleasing. If read aloud, these stories are sure to interest the adult as well as the youth.

1. Scamp
   A Dog's Own Story
2. Bear Brownie
   The Life of a Bear
3. Master Reynard
   The History of a Fox
4. Wee Willie Mousie
   Life from His Own Viewpoint
5. Kitty Purrpuss
   The Memoir of a Cat
6. Jackie Hightree
   The Adventures of a Squirrel

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO. Publishers

BOOKS WRITTEN BY

THOMAS TAPPER

YOUTH AND OPPORTUNITY

12mo, cloth, net $1.00
Graduation Edition, net $1.25

"A book that will put many young men on the road to success."

ARTHUR BRISBANE, *in editorial in N. Y. American.*

"The book embodies a wonderful and practical message to men and women in any stage of life."

—Washington, D. C., Times.

EFFICIENCY: ITS SPIRITUAL SOURCE

12mo, limp cloth, net $1.00

"Few books of this size are so packed with discriminating thought."—*Cambridge Tribune.*

"A scholarly little book of psychology that will interest students as well as laymen."—*Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

A SCORE OF FAMOUS MEN

16mo, cloth, 35 cents.

Pithy biographies of men who have succeeded in overcoming difficulties and surmounting obstacles.

THE BOY AS A CITIZEN

16mo, cloth, 35 cents.

A book that will stimulate ambition and encourage the boy who is trying to make a place for himself.

LITTLE STORIES OF INSPIRATION

16mo, cloth, 35 cents.

Stories of real people whose experiences will be helpful to others.

GETTING ON IN LIFE

16mo, cloth, 35 cents.

Practical talks that will spur ambition and aid in the attainment of an ideal.

YOUTH AND OPPORTUNITY

By THOMAS TAPPER, Litt. D.

Bound in cloth, net $1.00
Graduation Edition, net $1.25

A book that will put many young men on the road to success

"Because of its suggestive and inspirational qualities, and because it contains numerous illustrations from the lives of great characters, THIS BOOK DESERVES A WIDE CIRCLE OF READERS."

—Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

"The chapters abound in vivid word pictures drawn from the lives of humble and eminent people. The message of the book is decidedly optimistic."

—Boston Globe.

"The entire discussion is conducted on a high plane, and yet not higher than any individual ought to attain and make his own. *It is pleasing to commend this work for its vivid interest.*"

—Buffalo Evening News.

"The book is full of good advice to young people, and is interesting reading for those who have passed beyond the pressing need of its suggestions."

—Springfield Republican.

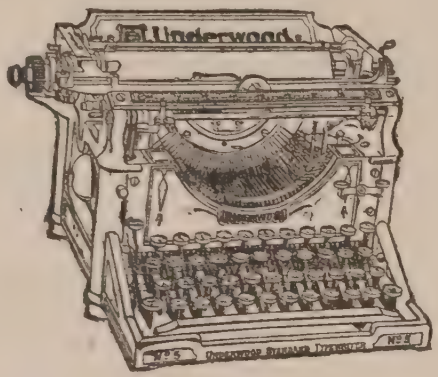
"The style of the author is pleasing, and the book is particularly valuable for the great army of young and old who are struggling to better their condition."

—Portland (Ore.) Telegraph.

The Best Story Ever Written

Is The History of The

UNDERWOOD



Changed typewriters to UNDERWOOD form.

Captured each year for ten years International Speed, Accuracy and Durability Trophy.

Won its way to hearts of all expert operators.

"The Machine You Will Eventually Buy."

Y0-CLA-421